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November 2025

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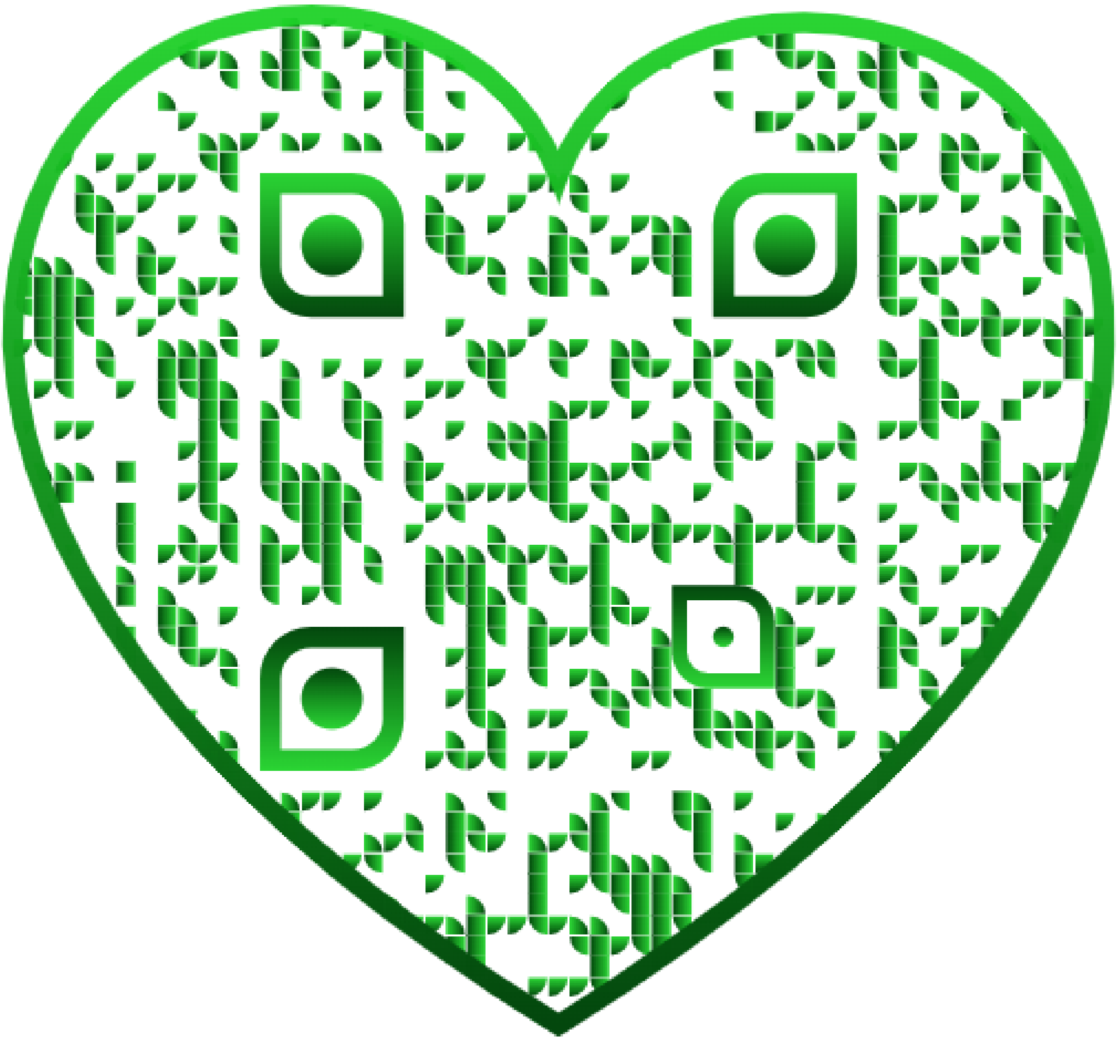

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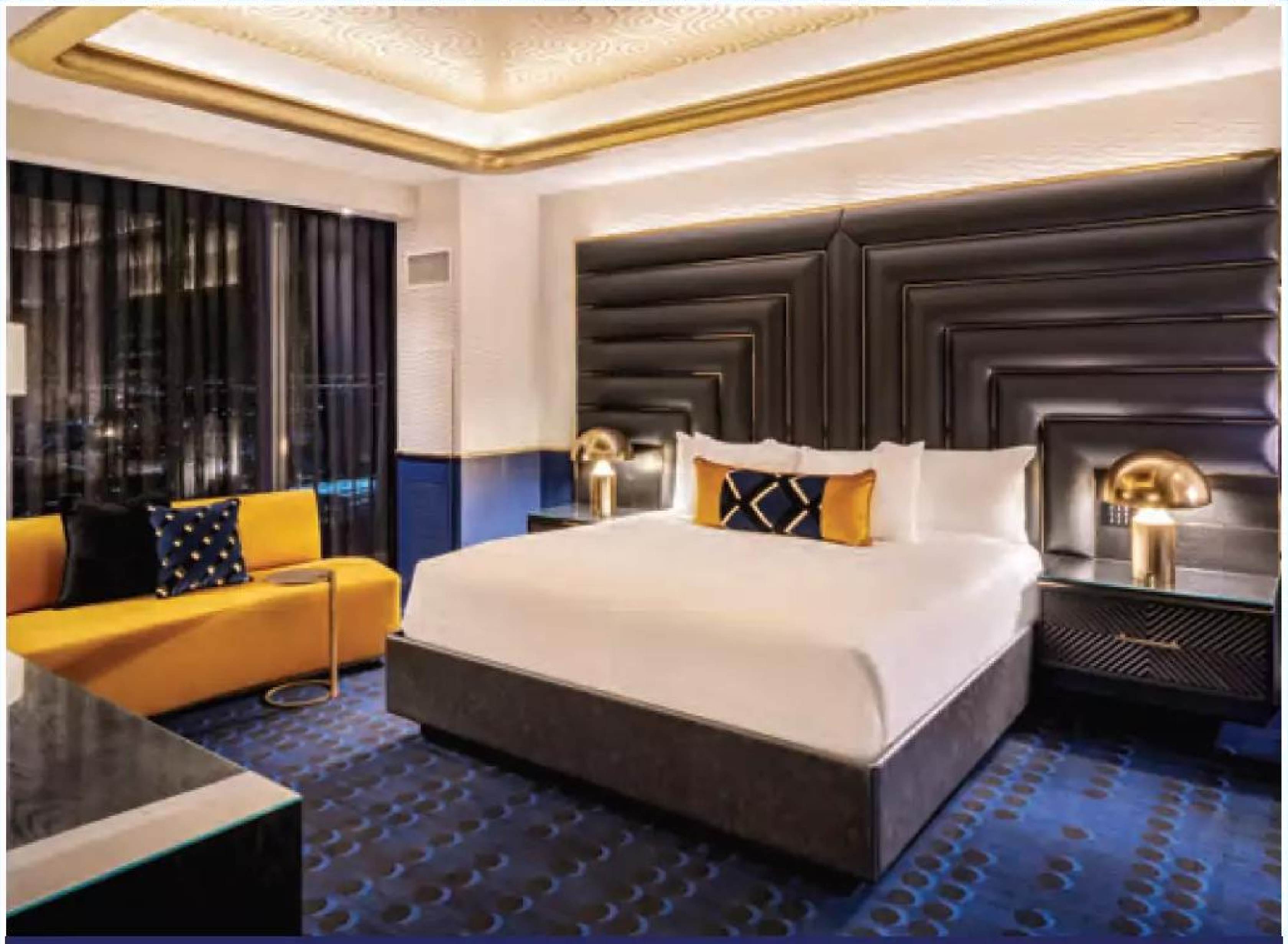

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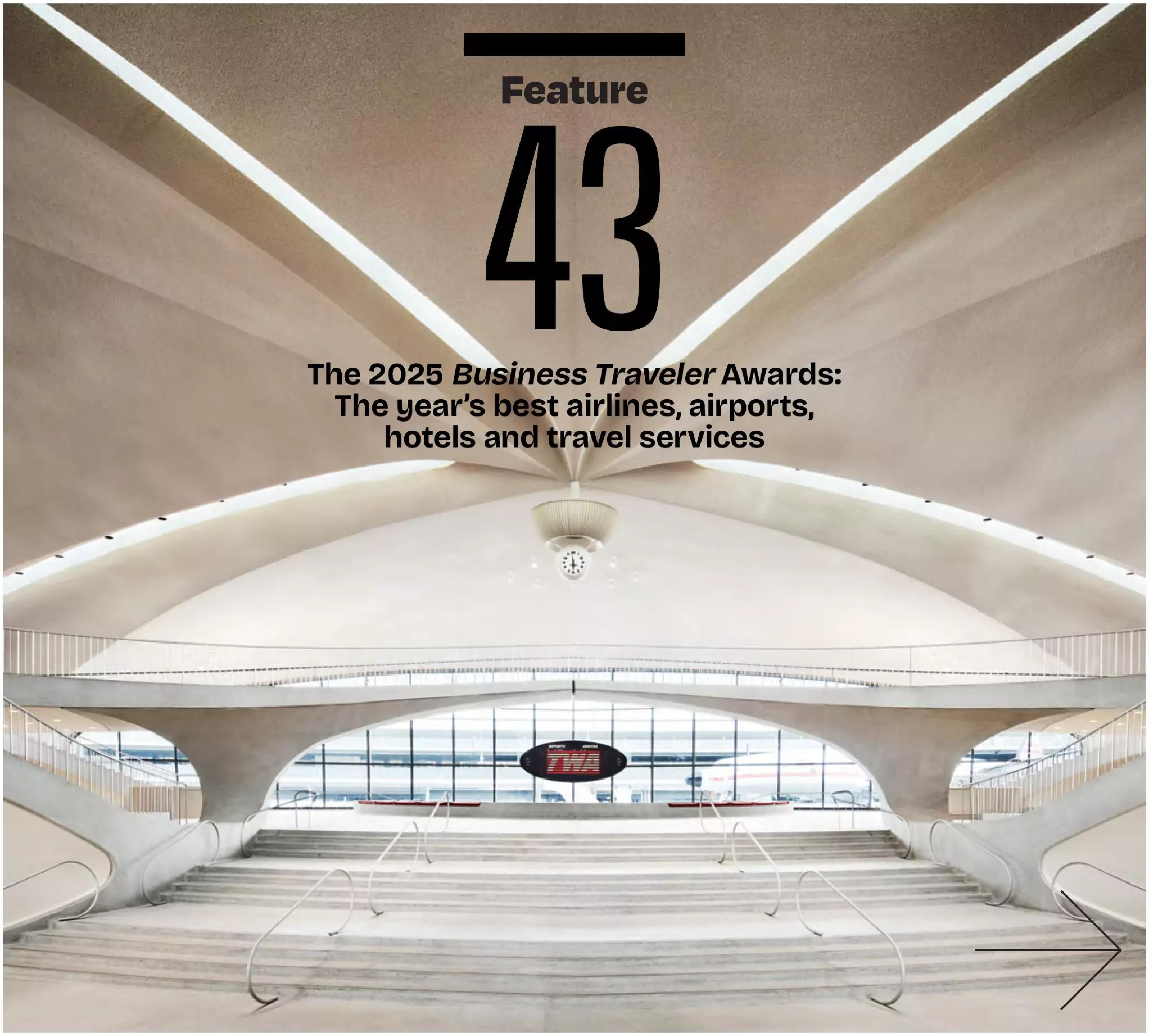

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The 2025 *Business Traveler* Awards: The year's best airlines, airports, hotels and travel services

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EDITOR'S LETTER

WELCOME TO THE November issue, a special edition spotlighting the winners of our annual *Business Traveler* Awards. This year we've taken it up a notch with a premier section honoring the very best airlines, airports and hotels in the world. The victories were based on both reader votes—more than 95,000 across the globe—and the opinions of our expert panel of travel executives, journalists and consultants. This is followed by our regional North American awards, whose outcomes were based solely on reader input. Throughout, we have added editorial comment when the results might benefit from nuance and perspective. We congratulate all the winners for going above and beyond to provide stellar experiences for their clients.

Elsewhere, we look at the new trend in executive dining—not in buzzy see-and-be-seen restaurants, but instead in the discreet environs of hotel suites. In these luxe aeries, personalized attention and an intimate atmosphere blend with privacy, unique experiences and culinary virtuosity to provide an unforgettable evening for clients and friends. We also investigate how AI can improve business travel—if people want to adopt it—and rate the country's most (and least) loved airports.

Meanwhile, our "Bright Ideas" department recommends ideas for a day off in the Swedish capital of Stockholm, takes readers inside the delicious world of under-the-radar supper clubs, and details the new wellness concept of diets promoting radiant skin, proving what you eat really does affect how you look.

And as the holidays are approaching, we have some gifting thoughts for the favorite business traveler in your life, from luggage that will add a bright uplift to the New Year to a sensational bodycare line that is the toast of London.

Please enjoy this special issue.

Eric Newill

Eric Newill
Editor in Chief

CONTRIBUTORS

LAURIE BROOKINS
WRITER
Inside, Brookins recommends ideal giftable luggage for the holidays. "If I were to give myself any of the pieces, it would be the Louis Vuitton Neverfull." She writes for *Four Seasons Magazine* and *The Hollywood Reporter*.

BETH DUNLOP
WRITER
The Pulitzer-nominated architecture critic offers an appreciation of New York-JFK's TWA Hotel and its prolific designer, Eero Saarinen. "I've long been fascinated by Saarinen's work." Dunlop's book *Gardens for Modern Houses* was published this year.

JACLYN TROP
WRITER
Trop speaks with our "Corner Office" subject, Peninsula Hotels COO Gareth Roberts, about overseeing the global portfolio's client experiences. "My favorite Peninsula property remains the original: The Peninsula Hong Kong." She writes for *Fast Company*.

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Presidential Suite dining room at The Bellevue, Philadelphia

TRENDS

Suite Eats

Today, the toughest restaurant table in town is in a private hotel room

STORY BY **TODD PLUMMER**

ONCE UPON A time, power meant being seen at the right table. For corporate dealmakers at the top of their game, the latest power play is curating a bespoke environment—where you aren't competing for your server's attention. The hotel suite dinner is intimate, impactful and growing in popularity.

At **The Knickerbocker Hotel** in Midtown Manhattan, a *Fortune* 100 exec booked

Continued from previous page

the hotel's Caruso Suite in lieu of bringing his investors to Le Bernardin or even the private dining room at The Grill. He had the room transformed into an art gallery-meets-dining salon complete with wall projections, a string quartet and chef's menu curated course by course. His later feedback to the hotel? That the evening was "the most impressive, seamless event they've hosted in Manhattan." Suddenly, scrambling for a Polo Bar or Carbone reservation months and months in advance doesn't seem worth the hassle.

The key difference from a business dinner at a restaurant? Booking a corporate dinner in a hotel room leverages not just a restaurant's culinary team, but also all members of staff who work on the guest experience.

"Our teams work cross-functionally—from concierge to events—to ensure every detail is white-glove-level," says Adam Raksin, The Knickerbocker's director of operations. "From custom floral design to personal butler service, these aren't cookie-cutter setups. We can also coordinate with outside vendors if a guest desires something more elaborate."

In Philadelphia, **The Bellevue**'s Presidential Suite—a space that has hosted nearly every U.S. President since Theodore Roosevelt—offers a turnkey corporate soiree for $7,500, including charcuterie, hors d'oeuvres, a chef-manned carving table or sushi station, premium bar, DJ and florals. The setting itself exudes history and gravitas, with a wood-paneled dining room, framed wallpapers from the original property, and an orangery complete with orange tree. It's less dinner party, more cabinet meeting.

Other hotels are allocating more resources toward private dining. In SoHo, **The Dominick**'s penthouses offer versatile spaces. "We've seen a marked uptick in inquiries from guests seeking entertaining spaces," says general manager Justine McCleery.

> "From custom floral design to personal butler service, these aren't cookie-cutter setups."

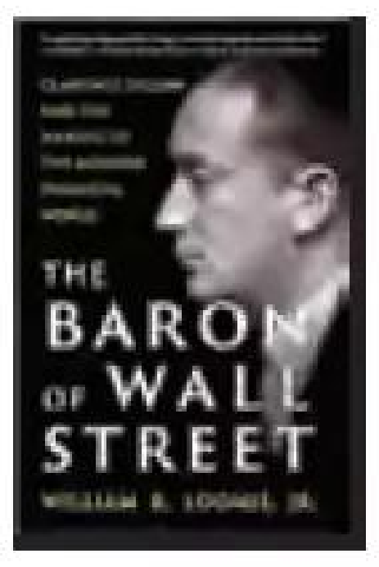
FROM TOP The Upper House, Hong Kong; Dine in the Sky, Shangri-La The Shard, London

Across the Atlantic, London's tony **Shangri-La The Shard** is capitalizing on this trend. The hotel, a favorite among posh corporate types for its proximity to London's financial district, has converted three of its guest rooms into Dine in the Sky, an exclusive private dining concept. The prix-fixe program ($503 per person) allows guests to experience the London skyline in an intimate setting, including a glass of champagne, three-course menu, and a bottle of wine.

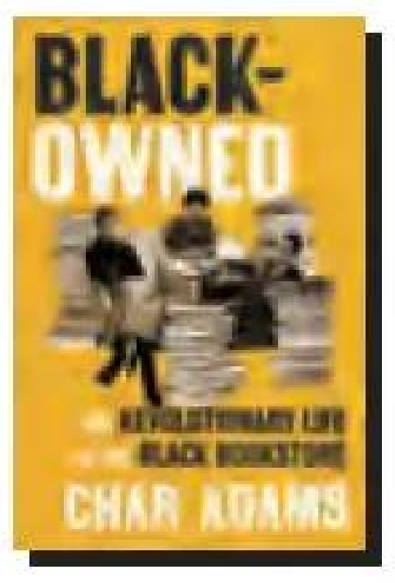
In Hong Kong, **The Upper House** reports an appetite for in-suite entertaining. Its André Fu Suite—a serene, residential-style space named after its world-renowned, award-winning designer—has hosted everything from investor roundtables to board meetings to fashion shows. "We are seeing an increased demand for in-suite dining experiences that can, compared to traditional business centers, offer a more informal and intimate setting," says Simon McHendry, general manager. Yet beyond the swank perks and billion-dollar Hong Kong views, suite dinners at The Upper House trade in something money can't (often) buy: discretion.

"Privacy is another advantage," says McHendry. "With a suite, you control who comes and goes. For industries where confidentiality is key, that discretion is invaluable."

BOOKS



***The Baron of Wall Street: Clarence Dillon and the Making of the Modern Financial World* by William R. Loomis, Jr. (out 11/4)**
Clarence Dillon reshaped the banking industry with an approach that led to the creation of ideas like junk bonds. Loomis sets a stage worthy of *The Great Gatsby*, showcasing the intersection of money and politics in the Roaring Twenties.



***Black-Owned: The Revolutionary Life of the Black Bookstore* by Char Adams (out 11/4)**
Black-owned bookshops have held a place in American culture since the first one opened, serving as hubs for community and centers for political organization. Adams highlights stories such as that of Noname, founder of the Radical Hood Library in L.A.

IMAGES THE BELLEVUE HOTEL; THE UPPER HOUSE; SHANGRI-LA THE SHARD, LONDON

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STORY BY
BOYD FARROW

Fan Favorite

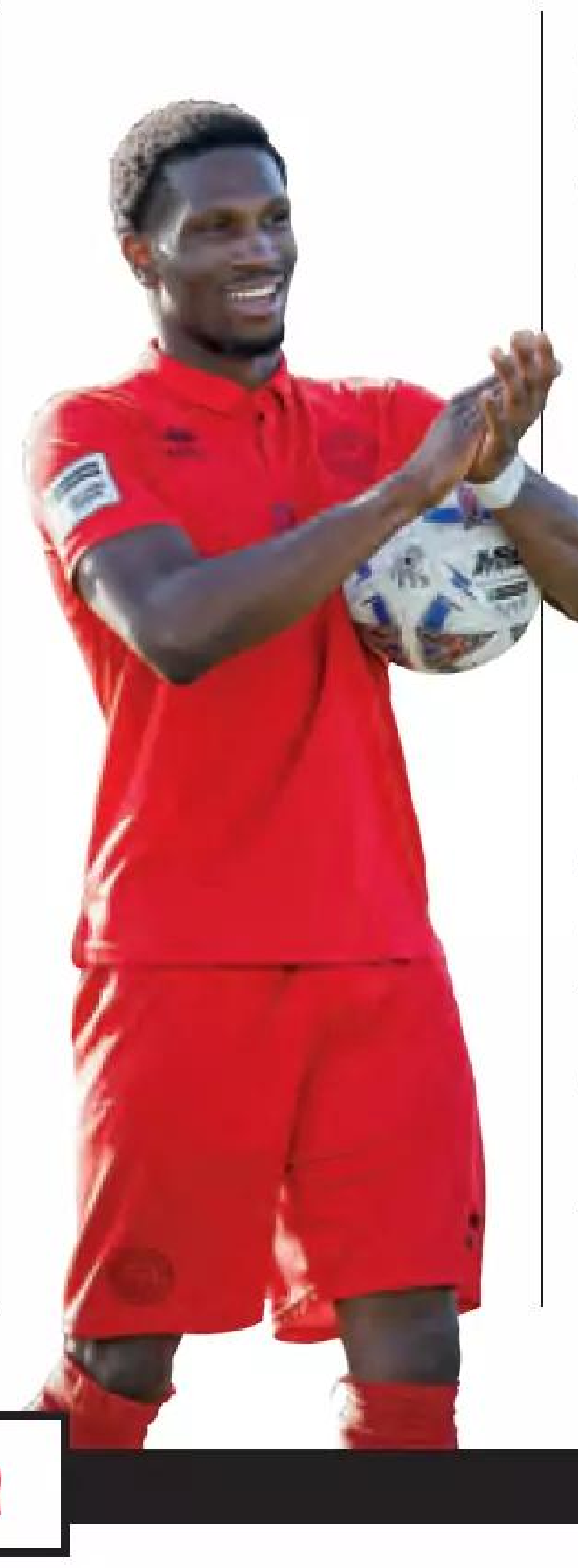
A U.K. soccer club invites its followers to win a trip to the Caribbean

FROM TOP Wyndham Grand Barbados Sam Lords Castle; Eastbourne Borough player Pemi Aderoju

AS SOCCER'S POPULARITY continues to grow, it is not only the giant clubs such as Manchester United and Real Madrid that are developing relationships with far-flung promotional partners. Take Eastbourne Borough. The nonleague club based on the south coast of England recently teamed up with the Wyndham Grand Barbados Sam Lords Castle, a beach resort close to the island's very own Eastbourne—named when the Caribbean island was a British colony.

Club chairman Simon Leslie says he first spotted the marketing opportunities when he was on vacation in Barbados earlier this year—a trip that he now says "felt like fate." At the very least it was good timing, with the Wyndham Grand management proving to be equally excited at this novel way of introducing the resort to a new set of visitors.

To kick off the partnership, Eastbourne Borough and the Wyndham Grand have launched a Boro to Barbados competition, which gives fans of the club the chance to win a weeklong all-inclusive vacation for two at the hotel, including flights from London. To enter, fans simply have to post a photo of themselves wearing the team's latest home or alternative shirt on any social media channel, alongside the hashtag #BoroToBarbados and tagging @wyndhamgrandbarbados, @EBFC_Official and @ConnectMgt, the agency sponsoring the flights. The winner will be announced sometime after the team's final match of the season on April 25.



According to Devon Chase, associate sales director at Wyndham Grand, the lucky fan will feel right at home, not only in the namesake community but also everywhere on the island. Although known for being a nation of cricket lovers, Barbados has a huge soccer fan base. Someday they may be cheering on Eastbourne Borough.

> **The lucky fan will feel right at home, not only in the namesake community but also everywhere on the island.**

ON OUR RADAR

THE BIG BUZZ in the hotel world this month is centered on the reopening of the **W New York-Union Square**, one of the city's legendary properties. Fresh off a $100 million lobby-to-rooftop renovation, the W occupies an early-20th-century beaux-arts style building and offers 256 rooms.

Architect David Rockwell, who designed the original hotel, was tasked to reimagine his own work. Botanicals, abstract colors, contemporary artworks and black-and-white tones are pervading themes.

Amenities include The Living Room, serving coffee by day and cocktails come evening. The Living Room has its own identity as a social spot that's the heart of the hotel and features a double-height bar. Other callouts go to the signature restaurant, Seahorse, a seafood brasserie from acclaimed restaurateur John McDonald (of Lure Fishbar fame), the large gym and new rooftop bar with city views—come here for a sunset cocktail or late-evening nightcap.

W New York-Union Square

Business travelers can access more than 7,000 square feet of stylish meeting and event space.

Globally, **Mandarin Oriental Downtown, Dubai** is open for reservations. Situated in Wasl Tower, which commands the city's skyline with its distinctive asymmetrical architectural style, the property has 259 rooms and views of the surrounding area and Arabian Gulf. The two-story spa, featuring both natural healing practices and the latest wellness innovations, is a destination in and of itself. Guests are also spoiled when it comes to dining and imbibing: The hotel has nine venues, including French, Chinese, Greek and Italian spots.

—SHIVANI VORA

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STORY BY
ENRIQUE PERRELLA

TECHNOLOGY

Is Business Travel Ready for AI?

Though many say they look forward to it, there remains a hesitation

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE has become the industry's most talked-about tool, with companies racing to introduce booking assistants that promise to streamline the corporate travel experience. Yet despite the fanfare, new research says the business travel community remains cautious—intrigued by AI's potential but wary of handing over the reins just yet.

SAP Concur's 2024 Global Business Travel Survey, based on 3,750 travelers across 24 markets, highlights this paradox. Nearly nine out of ten respondents said they would be "comfortable" with AI-powered booking tools, provided they were rolled out responsibly. A fifth even described AI-driven travel recommendations as "critical."

And yet, when pressed, those same respondents admitted they weren't ready to use the technology. An identical 89 percent said they were not comfortable with AI-enabled booking today, underscoring a gap between theoretical acceptance and practical trust. Younger travelers were the most cautious: 95 percent of Gen Z and millennials voiced discomfort, compared to 83 percent of Gen X and 68 percent of baby boomers.

Concerns cluster around data privacy, training and bias. Nearly half of respondents wanted explicit assurances their personal information would be safeguarded, 38 percent wanted formal instruction on how to use the tools, and 37 percent needed confidence that the systems would not reinforce bias. "While the appetite for AI is strong, especially when it addresses the specific pain points that come with booking travel, businesses will need to ensure they roll out AI tools in a responsible manner," said Charlie Sultan, president of Concur Travel.

That caution comes as SAP Concur itself unveiled Booking Agent, an AI-powered assistant designed to turn a text or voice prompt—such as, "Book me a flight to Miami on Thursday morning"—into an itinerary aligned with company policy. By folding in real-time pricing, compliance rules and expense integration, the company is pitching a future where booking travel requires as little effort as asking a digital butler.

The problem, however, is that the industry is moving faster than its users. A separate poll presented at the Business Travel Show America revealed that only 10 percent of travel buyers trust AI-generated recommendations for bookings, itineraries or policies. Even fewer use AI-based dynamic pricing insights to guide purchasing, though 30 percent say they plan to adopt them soon.

Corporate travel managers remain pragmatic about AI's near-term role. Their wish list is less about flashy booking prompts and more about practical automation: streamlining expense reporting, optimizing budgets, providing real-time disruption updates, and eliminating repetitive tasks. Steve Clagg, a corporate travel technology consultant and judge at the show's Innovation Faceoff, put it bluntly: "The core inefficiencies that many travel buyers and managers are faced with—manual workflows, fragmented data and systems, poor compliance oversight and limited operational visibility—aren't just inconveniences, they are very real and present barriers."

Clagg sees promise in AI's ability to reduce manual workloads, but cautions that success "is determined just as much by human input as the data it uses."

For now, the AI-powered booking future looks like an innovation in search of willing adopters. Travelers and managers alike can envision efficiency gains, but mistrust, lack of training, and cultural resistance keep adoption limited. The technology may be ready, but the market isn't—at least not yet.

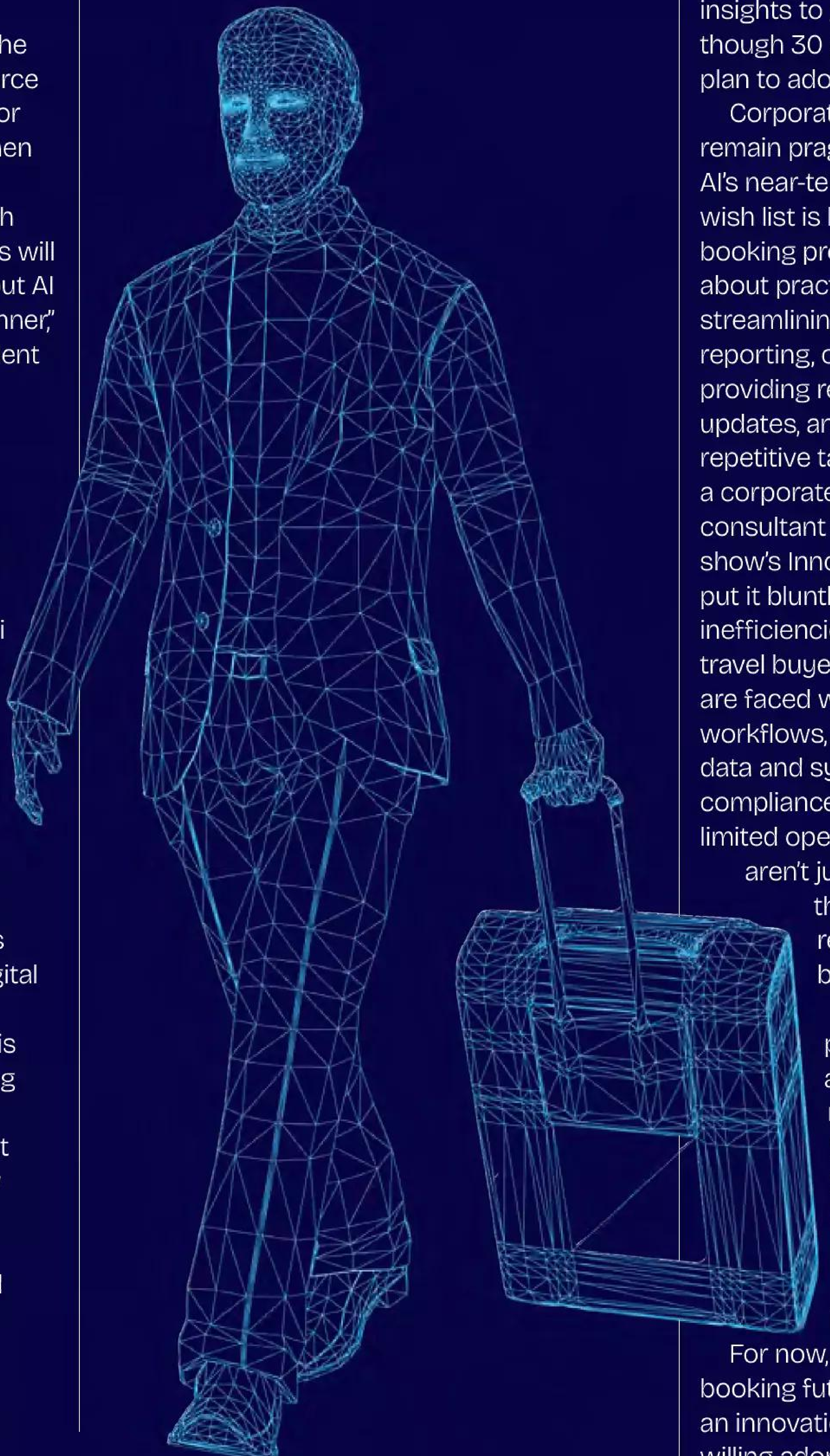
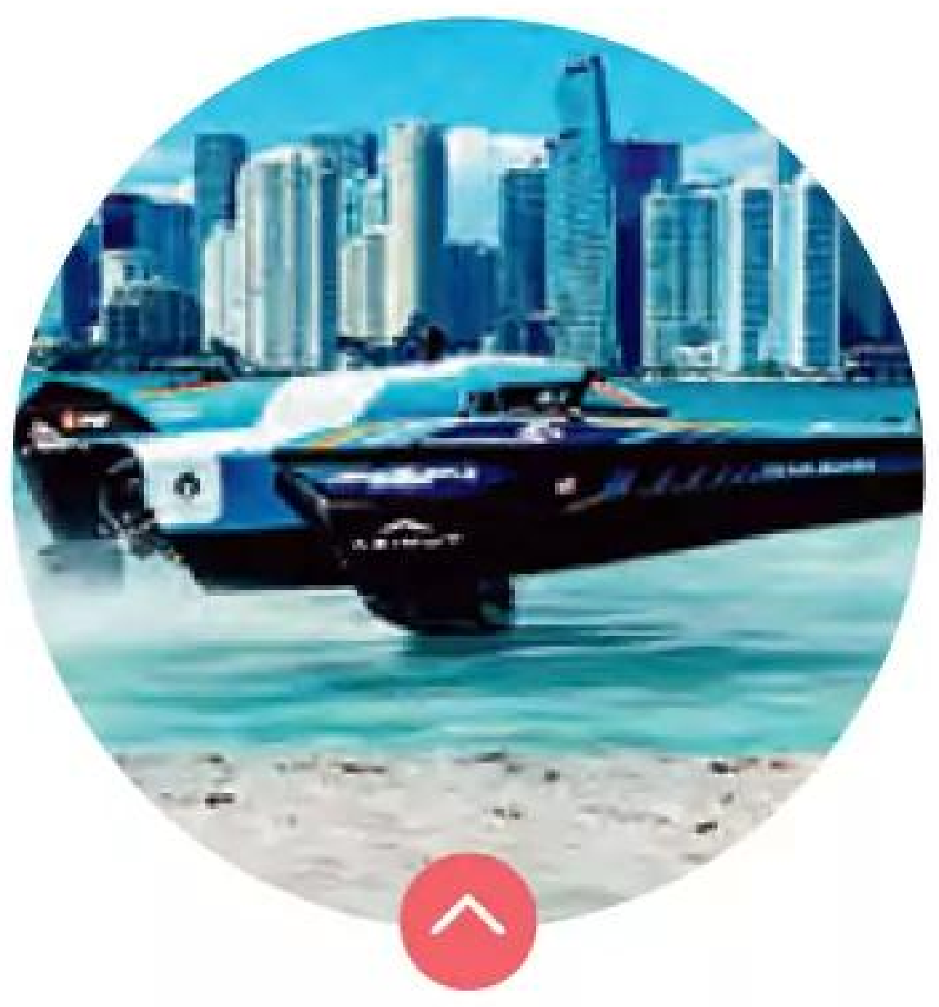


IMAGE **GETTY IMAGES**

> "While the appetite for AI is strong, businesses will need to ensure they roll out AI tools in a responsible manner."

IMAGES COURTESY OF E1 MIAMI GP; CAMERON WILDER/FOOD & WINE CLASSIC IN CHARLESTON; HARRY MURPHY WEB SUMMIT VIA SPORTSFILE; COURTESY OF HEATHROW; ADOBE STOCK

EVENT CALENDAR



E1 Miami GP

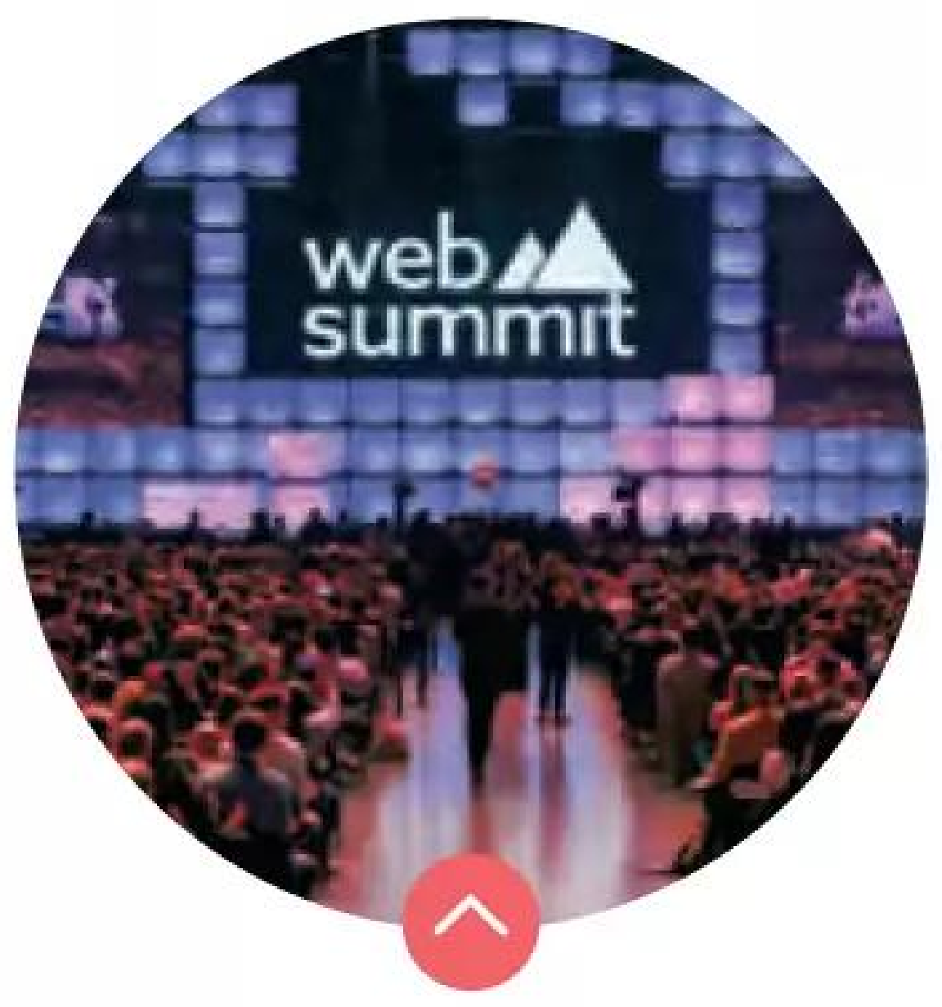
Nov. 7- 8

The all-electric powerboat race again makes a splash in Miami. Bulova is sponsoring the city's Team Miami, co-owned by Marc Anthony. Fans can catch the race near the Miami Marine Stadium. Qualifying begins November 7. ***e1series.com***

Food & Wine Classic Charleston

Nov. 14-16

This event celebrates low-country cuisine. Ticketholders can meet culinary fixtures such as Kwame Onwuachi and Emeril Lagasse. ***foodandwineclassicincharleston.com***



Web Summit

Nov. 10-13

Lisbon again hosts one of the world's largest technology conferences. The agenda will include tech talks, roundtables and interactive sessions. This year's speakers include Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 CEO Toto Wolff. ***websummit.com***

STORY BY
ENRIQUE PERRELLA

FROM TOP London Heathrow; Chicago O'Hare

Grand Central

A new report ranks the world's most connected airports

ANALYTICS FIRM OAG has released its latest Megahubs report, identifying the world's most connected airports in 2025. Once again, London Heathrow leads the global rankings, claiming the top spot for the third consecutive year.

The findings come amid a remarkable rebound in international aviation. According to IATA, global passenger volumes in 2024 were 3.8 percent higher than in 2019, with traffic continuing to rise this year. OAG's analysis, now in its tenth year, focused on flight data between September 2024 and August 2025, and measured international connections within a six-hour window on the busiest day of global aviation: August 1, 2025.

On that day, Heathrow offered 59,240 possible international connections to 226 destinations worldwide.

"Heathrow's sustained dominance reflects its vital role in global travel," said John Grant, chief analyst at OAG.

Ross Baker, chief customer officer at Heathrow, said, "This reflects our global reach, the strong airline partnerships that enable it, and the benefits it brings to U.K. passengers and businesses," he said. With expansion on the horizon, Heathrow is positioning itself to extend that advantage.

Istanbul surged from eighth place in 2024 to second this year, driven by a 25-percent increase in connections under Turkish Airlines' expanding network.

Amsterdam climbed to third place, while Kuala Lumpur dropped to fourth. Frankfurt, Seoul Incheon and Tokyo Haneda also highlight the dominance of European and Asian hubs in global connectivity.

Grant noted the shifting balance: "Our 2025 ranking underscores the balance between established gateways and ambitious challengers worldwide, which has developed over ten years of Megahubs."

North America placed two airports in the global top ten: Chicago O'Hare at seventh and Atlanta at eighth. O'Hare handled more than 65,000 connections to 297 destinations on its peak day—up 17 percent—helping it climb two spots. "Chicago is second to none in American aviation, and this ranking proves that our sustained investments are paying off," said Michael McMurray, commissioner of the Chicago Department of Aviation, pointing at modernization and capacity growth as key to future competitiveness.

> **"Heathrow's sustained dominance reflects its vital role in global travel."**

STORY BY
IVY YOUNG

Tops or Flops?

A new survey rates America's most loved and hated airports

EVERY TRAVELER HAS that one airport they dread—the place where signage seems designed by a sadist, construction never ends, and a cup of coffee costs as much as an oil change. But according to J.D. Power's latest North America Airport Satisfaction Study, some airports are actually managing to make the experience almost… pleasant. The 2025 results separate the hubs worth arriving early at from the ones that test even the most seasoned traveler's patience.

The survey, now in its 20th year, gathered insights from over 30,000 travelers in the U.S. and Canada who used airports between July 2024 and July 2025. Airports were categorized as mega (33 million+ passengers), large or medium, with travelers rating them on ease of travel, staff helpfulness, terminal facilities, dining, and convenience of access.

For the second year running, Minneapolis-Saint Paul (MSP) topped the mega-airport list, beating out Detroit and Phoenix. MSP earned praise for its navigability, accessibility and helpful staff. It also scored big points for food and retail—the kind of airport where grabbing a snack doesn't feel like culinary punishment.

On the other end of the scale, Newark once again cemented its reputation as the least satisfying mega-airport, followed by Toronto Pearson and Charlotte Douglas. Newark's usual suspects—endless traffic, accessibility headaches and chronic construction—dragged it down.

Interestingly, overall satisfaction is trending upward—even as passenger volumes set records and disruptions mount. Travelers cited recent expansions, new amenities and airports embracing local dining and retail as major improvements.

As Michael Taylor, managing director of travel, hospitality and retail at J.D. Power, explained, "A big part of this increase in passenger satisfaction is due to recently completed improvements in many airport facilities themselves. A few big projects have now been completed and many more are underway or about to break ground. A decades-long trend of bringing unique, local flavor to passengers has positively impacted the airport experience, with these local touches having a major influence on passenger satisfaction." Translation: Airports are finally figuring out that travelers would rather eat tacos from a beloved local spot than settle for another sad heat-lamp pizza.

If you're routing through Minneapolis, congratulations. If you're stuck at Newark, may the odds be ever in your favor.

FROM TOP Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport; Newark Liberty International Airport

MOST SATISFYING MEGA-AIRPORTS

1. Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport (MSP)
2. Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW)
3. Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX)
4. Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW)
5. Las Vegas Harry Reid International Airport (LAS)

MOST SATISFYING LARGE AIRPORTS

1. John Wayne Airport, Orange County (SNA)
2. Tampa International Airport (TPA)
3. Dallas Love Field (DAL)
4. Kansas City International Airport (MCI)
5. Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU)

MOST SATISFYING MEDIUM AIRPORTS

1. Indianapolis International Airport (IND)
2. Ontario International Airport (ONT)
3. Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BUF)
4. Jacksonville International Airport (JAX)
5. Palm Beach International Airport (PBI)

IMAGES **COURTESY OF MSP/ METROPOLITAN AIRPORTS COMMISSION; GETTY IMAGES**

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#MEETMOROCCO
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EXPERIENCE
4 STAR AIRLINE
SKYTRAX
oneworld

Keynote

Where Innovation Meets Inspiration

CORNER OFFICE *STORY BY JACLYN TROP*

CLOCKWISE Peninsula Hotels COO Gareth Roberts; pool at The Peninsula London; Pen Top bar at The Peninsula New York

CLIENT SERVICES

Gareth Roberts, COO of The Peninsula Hotels, prioritizes bespoke customer interaction across the global brand

GROWING UP, GARETH Roberts never dreamed of finding a career that united his passions for cars, luxury and hospitality. But the chief operating officer of The Peninsula Hotels is the living embodiment of exactly that.

Roberts earned a degree in hotel administration at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas and began his career in 2002 managing rooms at The Peninsula Beverly Hills. He stayed for a decade, working his way up to resident manager before moving across the Pacific to manage The Peninsula Shanghai. In 2015, he was promoted to The Peninsula's flagship hotel in Hong Kong as general manager of operations. For nearly a century, travelers have flocked to this "Grande Dame of the Far East," a paragon of hospitality. Then, in 2024, Roberts was named executive director and COO of The Peninsula Hotels group.

Today, he is standing on the green at The Quail in Carmel, California, observing the final moments of his annual pièce de résistance: The Quail, A Motorsports Gathering, a lavish event owned by The Peninsula Hotels and held each August during Monterey Car Week in Central California. Ticketholders pay upwards of $1,500 to stroll past more than 200 of the world's rarest cars while wearing their garden-party finery, a swarm of parasols, pocket squares and picnic baskets on the golf course. As the last guests trickle out and vendors begin breaking down their displays, Roberts looks relieved, as though he's just crossed a marathon finish line—albeit in a dapper linen suit.

"Good afternoon, Sheikh," he greets a passerby in casual dress at the entrance to the clubhouse before sitting down with me. The event draws the global glitterati and approximately two dozen car companies, from Rolls-Royce to Bentley, which come to reveal their latest vehicles and greet customers.

Roberts is spearheading The Peninsula's expansion of the event's footprint, overseeing a six-day classic-car rally across Japan as well as running the hotel group's annual Best of the Best Award in Paris for rare vehicles. He is also unveiling the Car of the Year in the ballroom of The Peninsula's hotel in London. Through it all, he has perfected the art of bespoke customer service, which he sees as the 12-property boutique group's point of distinction vis-à-vis luxury hotel conglomerates that cannot provide the same personalized attention.

"Our staff will watch what you're doing, what you're drinking, so that the next day they can ask, 'Can I get you another Diet Coke?'" he says. "These are very small touches that really make you feel known and seen."

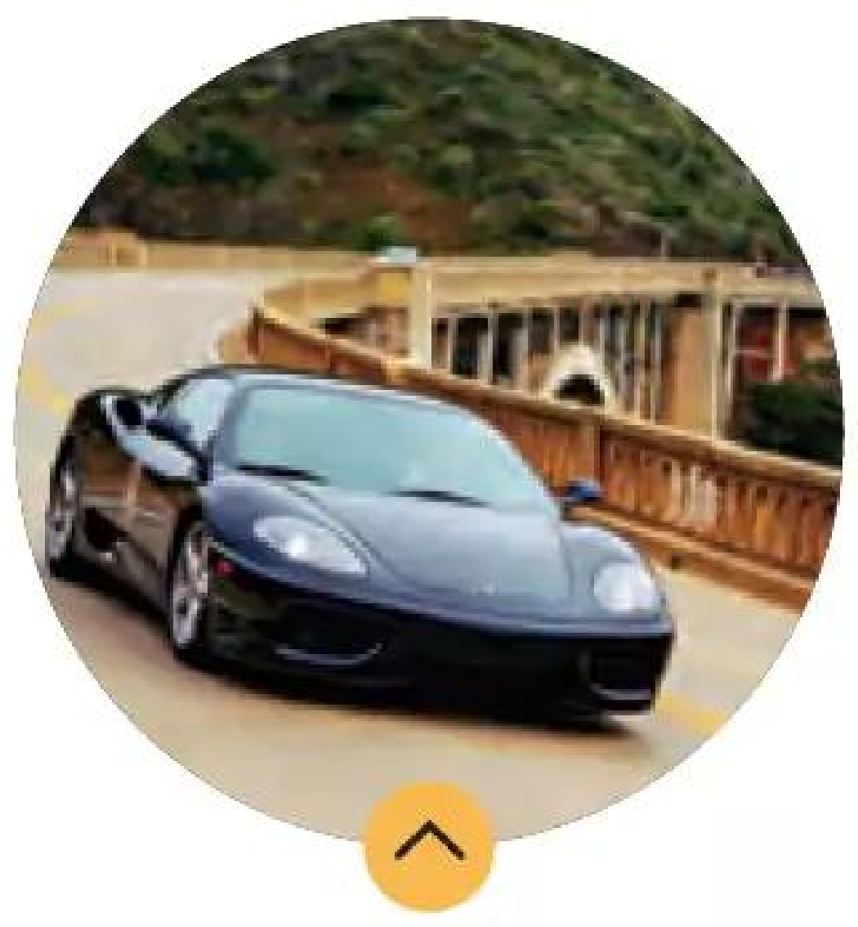
The Peninsula inspires employees to provide the best possible service, he says. "It's not about focusing on a checklist of things that we expect our staff to do in an interaction, but to encourage them to take a step back, observe the guest, and say, Okay, what does this guest want in this particular moment and circumstance?

"Two different guests seated at the same restaurant could have different expectations."

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE PENINSULA HOTELS

WHEEL WORLD

3 PENINSULA AUTO SHOWS



THE QUAIL RALLY
Leading up to the headline Motorlux event at Monterey Jet Center, The Peninsula hosts a three-day rally for participants to eat, drive and be merry. The cavalcade wends along the Pacific Coast and Santa Cruz Mountains, with a stop at the legendary WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca for track time.

THE PENINSULA CLASSICS BEST OF THE BEST
Announced and presented each year at a Peninsula property, The Peninsula Classics Best of the Best Award seeks to honor the world's finest classic car. A panel of judges including Ralph Lauren, Jay Leno, HRH Prince Michael of Kent and Henry Ford III crowns a single winner from the cars named Best of Show at a variety of concours the preceding year.

THE JAPAN DRIVING EXPERIENCE
In April, The Peninsula put guests behind the wheel for a six-day rally through Honshu, Japan's main island. The route featured mountain roads, scenic coastlines and views of Mount Fuji before culminating at the exclusive Magarigawa racetrack.

"For example, two different guests seated at the same restaurant at two different tables could have two completely different expectations," he continues. "Some people may want a longer, drawn-out description of the menu, while others may be in a hurry and want to eat quickly. Since the same server is serving both tables, the solution is to observe the guest and ask the right questions."

That's woven into the fabric of the group's newest hotels in London and Istanbul, as well as into the renovation of The Peninsula New York. Steps from Central Park, the hotel underwent a substantial refurbishment, from its 23rd-floor rooftop bar overlooking Fifth Avenue down to the lobby.

"We kept the heritage feel of the lobby with its beautiful grand staircase because it's a very historic building," Roberts says. "We didn't get rid of that, but we brightened it so that you walk in and feel a fundamental difference."

The construction of the London hotel at the corner of Hyde Park was even more extensive, with floating floors for two basement-level ballrooms and elevators designed to transport cars into the hotel. "We built these two beautiful, very large car lifts that can take the car from the ground level to be rolled into the ballroom," Roberts says.

The construction process reflected Roberts' belief in giving guests a reason to return over the long term. Sir Michael Kadoorie, chairman of the company that owns and operates The Peninsula Hotels, "was constantly challenging us to be the best," Roberts says. "It was always, 'How can we make this even better?'"

STORY BY
GAVIN KAYSEN
AS TOLD TO
EDEN HERBSTMAN

THE CULINARY CONNECTION

Passing on lessons learned from legendary chefs

MY CULINARY CAREER began with a letter. I sent chef Daniel Boulud a letter in 2005 requesting to work with him for one week, for free. That one letter changed my entire life. I worked as chef de cuisine at Café Boulud until 2014.

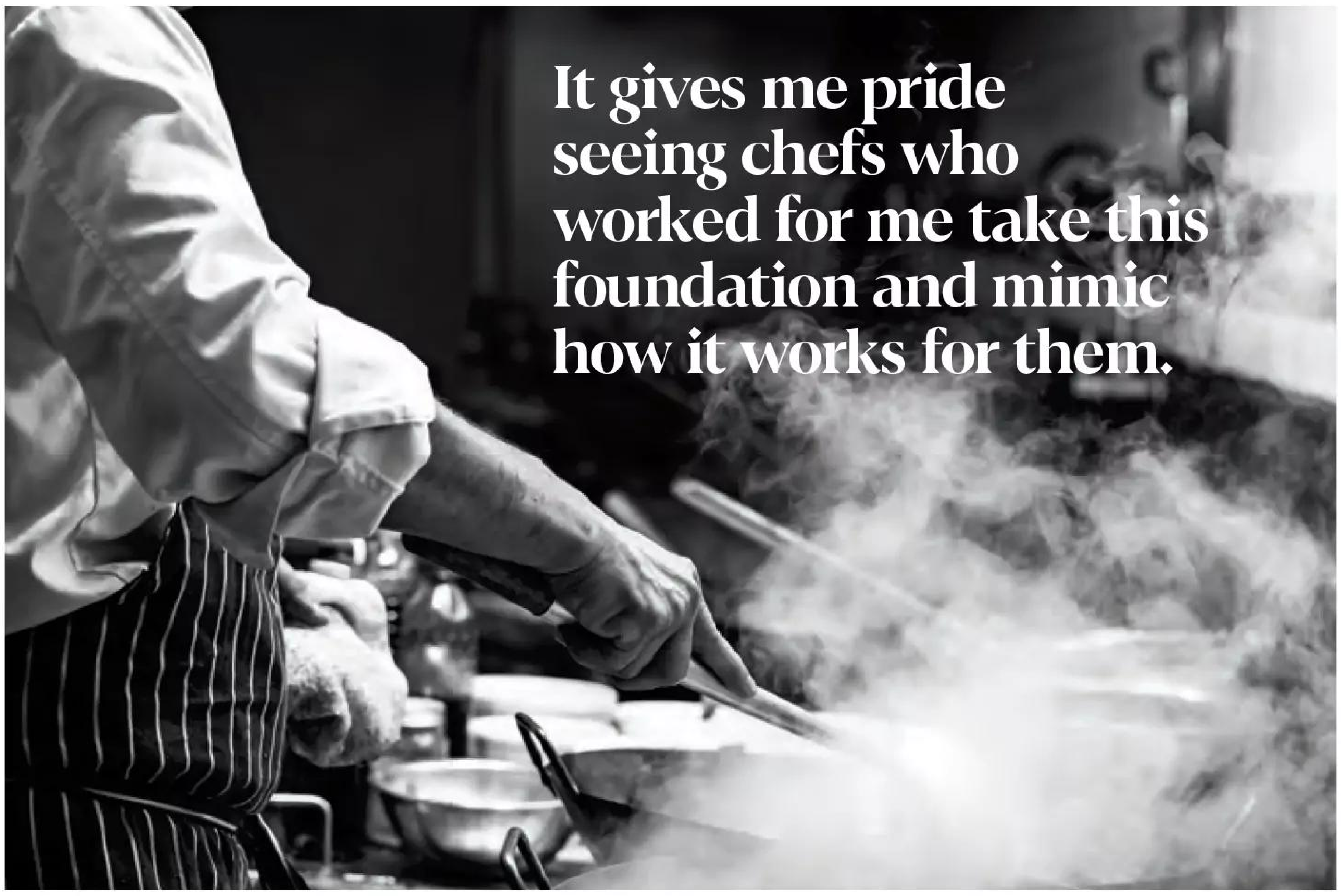
When I was working for Daniel in New York he would often say to me, “Even though the awning says Boulud, I want you to run it as if it was your own.” That really helped me think about restaurants as a business. I later went to do an event at The French Laundry in Napa. I sat down with chef Thomas Keller and let him know I was leaving Café Boulud. It was going to be announced in *The New York Times* the next day and I didn’t want him to read about it—I wanted him to hear it from me.

“Where are you going?” he asked. I told him I was going back home to Minneapolis to open my own restaurant. During this time, I had helped chefs Boulud, Keller and Jérôme Bocuse found the Ment’or nonprofit. I was struck by chef Keller’s reply: “Daniel, Jérôme and I would like to invest in your company.”

I couldn’t believe these chefs would want to invest. This formed the basis for a strong philosophy I believe in, that you should view things as collaboration and not competition. For me, this message has trickled down for over ten years at my restaurant Spoon and Stable.

This concept has allowed a lot of really talented people to work for our restaurant group and eventually be ready to go off on their own, including Diane Moua, who opened Diane’s Place, Adam and Jeanie Ritter of Bûcheron, and Lisa Wengler and Jo Seddon at Gia. These are all local Minneapolis restaurants, and they went off to make a name for themselves.

Chef Gavin Kaysen is a James Beard Award winner and the owner of Soigné Hospitality Group. Known for culinary leadership, Kaysen helped transform Minneapolis’ dining scene with acclaimed restaurants Spoon and Stable, Demi and Mara. This fall he opens his first restaurant outside Minnesota, The Merchant Room at Naples Beach Club, a Four Seasons Resort.



It gives me pride seeing chefs who worked for me take this foundation and mimic how it works for them.

In a smaller market like the Twin Cities, there’s an assumption that these people would be working against me when they opened their own restaurants. I see it as the total opposite. I see it as a great thing—it makes the food community here stronger. It also makes talent, and that allows talent to spread out amongst other restaurants, and hopefully attract new talent. It gives me pride seeing chefs who worked for me take this foundation and mimic how it works for them. It should be the same foundational DNA, but their own.

I’m fortunate that looking back at the last 16 years I’ve had chef Daniel Boulud on one shoulder and chef Thomas Keller on the other. They’ve each taught me separate, meaningful lessons. From each of them, I’ve learned curiosity isn’t something everyone has. Both are so curious, and generous. They care deeply about mentorship. They care deeply that the kitchen you’re working in is better than the kitchen they inherited. They also care deeply in fairness, in terms of, What are you learning? How are you learning?

I don’t know the corporate world, but I know from my own experience that you can’t be successful by taking shortcuts. Kitchens build, and need, foundations. Those foundational blocks will make you the best leader, entrepreneur or chef.

The younger generation thinks they can reach chefs, or anyone in a high-ranking position, by all means. Don’t send an Instagram message. Send a letter, put the pen to paper. The power of that shows a different level of commitment.

IMAGES **ERIN KINCHELOE; ADOBE STOCK**

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Bright Ideas

Destinations and trends influencing the culture

EXTRA DAY

Stockholm

STORY BY **SHIVANI VORA**

POSITIONED WHERE THE Baltic Sea meets Lake Mälaren, the Swedish capital encompasses 14 islands and more than 50 bridges. A walker's dream with its pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and thoroughfares, the city is sustainable, clean and replete with green space. It's also a center for the latest in art, technology, film and design. If you want to know what's currently in vogue, Stockholm is the place to go. Museums, vibrant cafés and fashionable homegrown boutiques abound. For the working crowd, the city is well-suited to host large meetings with its numerous conference hotels and unique venues, both indoor and out, and top-class infrastructure.

→

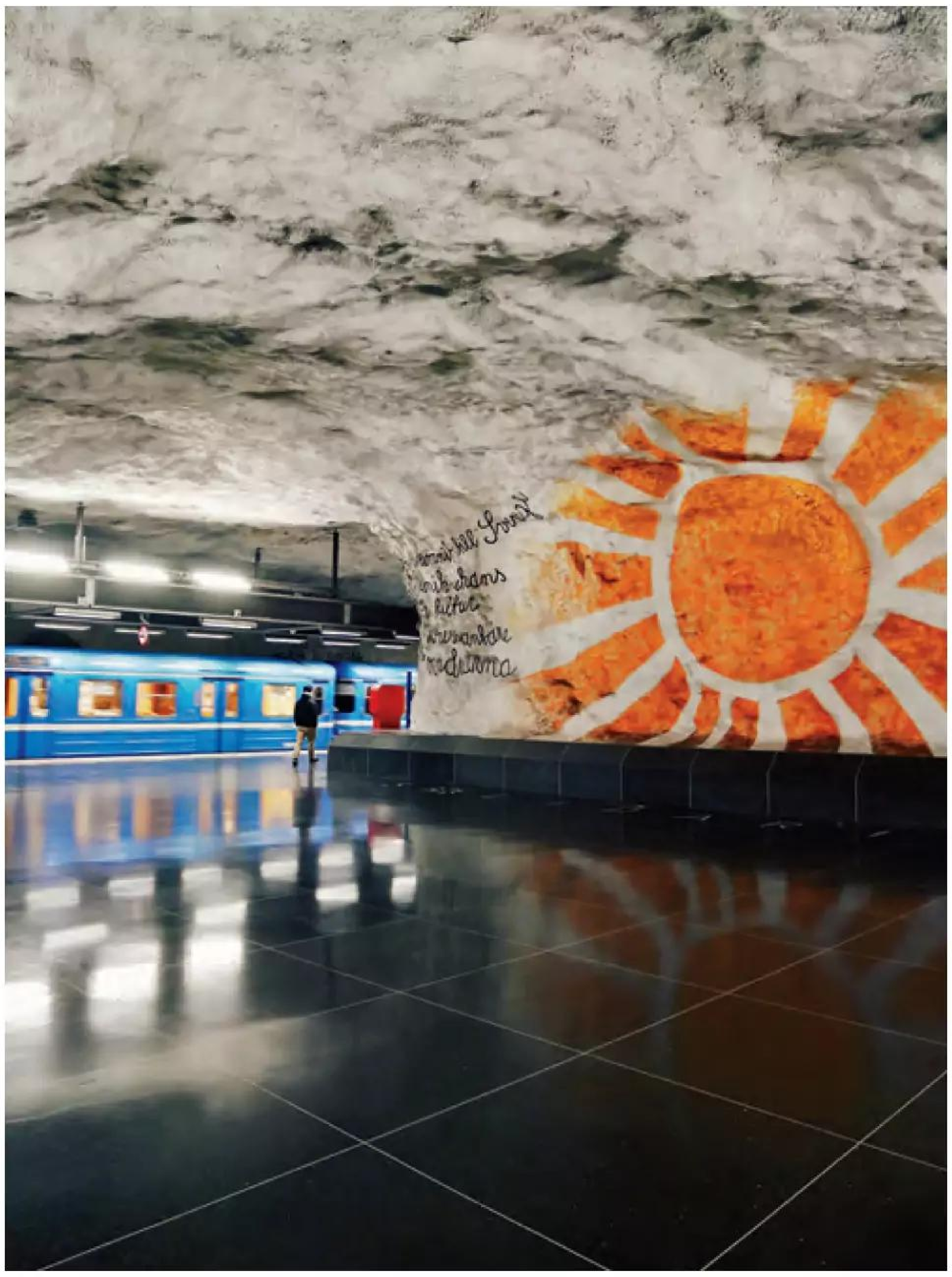
Continued from previous page

Bank Hotel
Located in the heart of town, the stylish and elegant Bank Hotel is housed in a 1910 Renaissance-style building that was, yes, formerly a bank. Opulence prevails here, with velvet furnishings and Venetian chandeliers, but a Nordic edge is added in the way of contemporary Swedish art. The 115 guest rooms feature natural materials, bespoke furniture and artwork from emerging local artists. Bonnie's, set in the former banking hall, is the signature restaurant and turns out delicious seasonal cuisine. The property also has three bars.
bankhotel.se

Sturehof
A meal at Sturehof is a must. This airy, always hopping downtown brasserie has been around since 1887 and serves seafood-centric Swedish cuisine. Standouts include the tempura-fried zucchini flowers, oysters, poached turbot with peas, and fillet of beef tartare.
sturehof.com

Subway Art Tour
Is it an art museum full of incredible works or a way to get around? Stockholm's subway system happens to be both: The underground train stations are said to be the longest art exhibit worldwide, with more than 60 miles of pieces on show. A group or private walking tour makes for an engaging way to learn about the murals, sculptures and installations displayed. Viator and Tours by Locals have options.
viatour.com; toursbylocals.com

Södermalm
Insiders know that this hilltop-set neighborhood in Stockholm's southern district is the hippest in town. Walk the scenic streets, meander into trendy shops, buzzy coffee bars and restaurants, and enjoy the expansive city views all around. Callouts go to Beyond Retro for vintage clothes, Bistro Bananas for a vast array of cuisine (including pizzas and vegan dishes), and Kaffe for the strong espresso and velvety lattes. Johanna Picano offers excellent walking tours of the area and will show you all the secret spots.
guidestockholm.com



FROM TOP
Subway art in Stockholm's Tensta station; Bank Hotel

Stockholm City Hall
A visit to City Hall is a fascinating glimpse into romanticism in architecture, prominent in the 18th and 19th centuries. It's no wonder that the Nobel Prize banquet is an annual tradition here. Ragnar Östberg designed the hall using eight million bricks, and the facade features a 348-foot-tall tower with three crowns. The inside is full of distinctive art, session halls for politicians, and grand assembly rooms. Don't miss the Golden Hall and its 18 million gold mosaic tiles, where Nobel Prize laureates, royals and guests dance post-dinner.
stadshuset.stockholm

3 STOCKHOLM BUSINESSES

Ericsson

Founded in 1876, this multinational telecommunications company created Bluetooth in 1989. With more than 57,000 granted patents, the company is a leader in 5G.

H&M

The fast-fashion behemoth, founded in 1947, now operates more than 4,300 stores around the world. It has famously partnered in collections with designers including Karl Lagerfeld and Stella McCartney.

Skanska

Opened as a concrete manufacturer in 1874, this construction giant has now built structures throughout the globe, including London's Gherkin and New Jersey's MetLife Stadium.

IMAGES SUBWAY ART IN STOCKHOLM'S TENSTA STATION, ARTIST: HELGA HENSCHEN, PHOTO: ROSANNA ANDERSSON/STOCKHOLMMEDIABANK.COM; JOHANNES MAXWELLER; ADOBE STOCK; GETTY IMAGES

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THE BODY WASH CONCENTRATE
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SCENT-SATIONAL

Everything's Coming Up Roses

A West End acting duo receives raves for their stylish bodycare brand

IMAGES COURTESY OF AKT

STORY BY
MARK C. O'FLAHERTY

LEFT AKT founders Andy Coxon and Ed Currie **OPPOSITE** AKT's SC. 01 Orange Grove collection, including body scrub, deodorant, body conditioner, body oil and body wash concentrate

> "We wanted something that would work on stage but also something to suit everyone."

ACTORS ANDY COXON and Ed Currie first met in late 2014 while they were performing as the Righteous Brothers in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* in London's West End, and soon became fast friends and roommates. Five years later, they were incredibly successful entrepreneurs, launching a range of body products inspired by their experience on sets and stages.

"There was a moment in *A Chorus Line* at the Palladium when one of my colleagues said I smelt really bad," says Currie, 35. "I'd always had a problem with sweating, and working in theater in summer, with so many layers of costume—often with no air conditioning—is challenging. You can't use aerosols because it's bad for vocal cords. I finally decided to make my own, using a basic recipe I found online, with coconut and essential oils and sodium." Currie says it worked. Sort of. The initial test gave him a catastrophic rash because he had no idea what he was doing with the concentration of oils, but it turned out to be R&D for what would become the AKT brand in 2020.

What was meant to be a side hustle for the pair became a business. They created batches of deodorant in their kitchen and then crossed paths with Sam Farmer, founder of an eponymous brand of skincare for young teens. "He was really interested in what we were doing," says Coxon, 36, "but he pointed out that the ingredients we'd been using would either bankrupt us or get us sued, so he fixed us up with a mentor and suggested we launch a Kickstarter." The couple created 1,000 units of sample product and handed them out to every cast and crew member they knew in the West End.

Fast-forward to 2020 and AKT was ready to launch. "We know how to write a script because of our backgrounds," says Currie. "That's what we did on each of the boxes—each has a little story on it, based on our motto of 'born to perform.'"

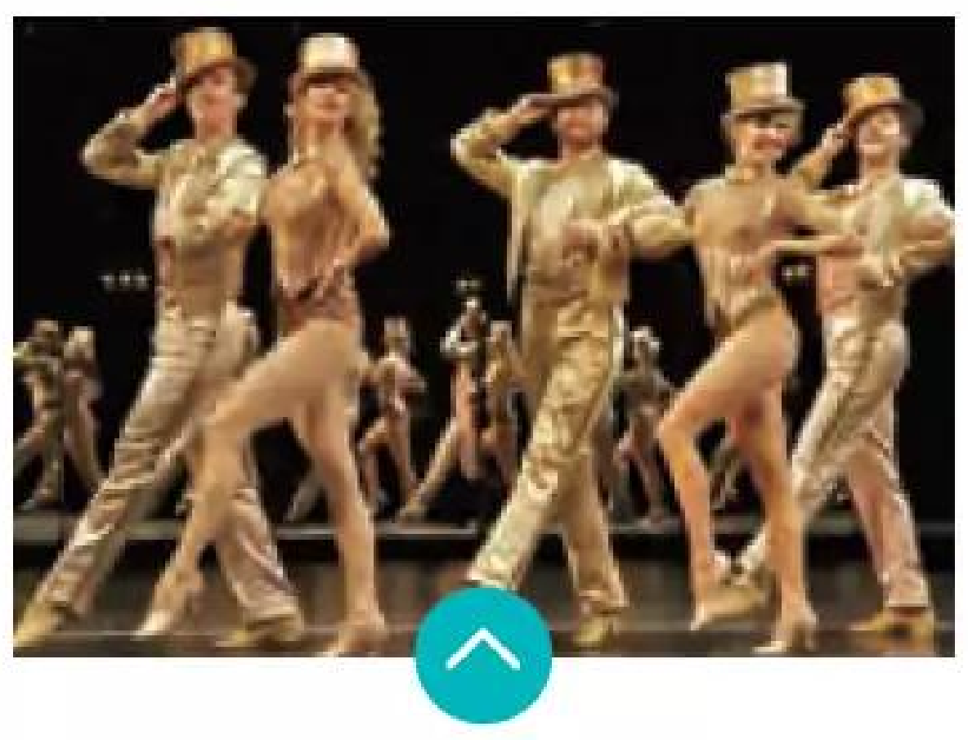
AKT was conceived and designed to go viral, which it soon did when British *Vogue* dubbed it the number-one deodorant in September 2020. The brand offers a brilliant case study in how to stop the scroll, beginning with its tubes and bottles and boxes in orange, lavender and a color they liken to "the Aegean Sea." Together, the tones are as arresting as a set of Ginori dinner plates, or a mix of paint swatches from Farrow & Ball. The deodorant balm is offered with a sculptural applicator, which is a photogenic novelty as much as anything, and AKT has added limited editions as well as body scrubs, oils and sponges to the range. Festive gift boxes for the holidays are now on sale, including in the U.S. at such retailers as Amazon, Bloomingdale's and the boutique beauty chain Credo. So far, the Discovery Set of five mini deodorant balms has been a big success. It has the same visual pull as the new lipsticks from Prada and Louis Vuitton, but at $50 it's a lot more accessible. It feels like a new kind of genderless luxury, which makes it democratic and business-savvy.

The fragrances are attractive but subtle, and repeat sales are strong but also unusual: 70 percent of customers try a different version when they come back. "We are offering them new things," says Currie, "and we are defined by our colors. People want to try them all. We had a balm called Hay Fever and it sold all 30,000 units. The scent was what we think of as an English summer—Earl Grey tea and marmalade—and the chartreuse packaging was inspired by Wimbledon, specifically the color of tennis balls."

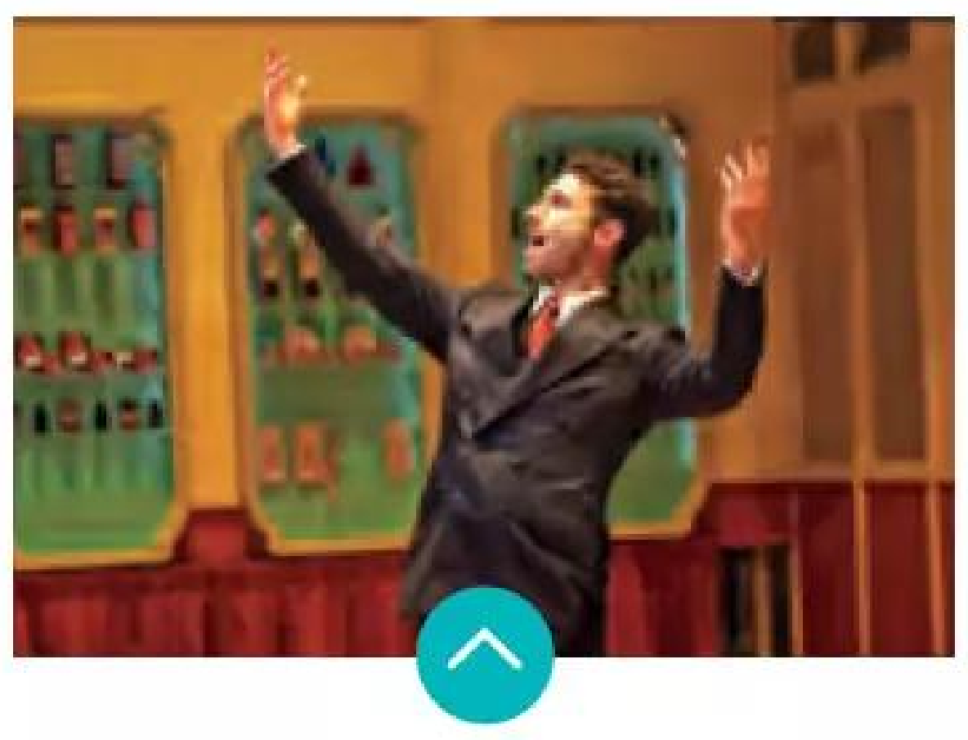
Do the pair still crave the theater? "I don't miss the lifestyle," says Coxon. "My boyfriend is in *Cabaret* right now and most of his evenings are spent waiting backstage, not performing." Currie remembers their time onstage together, years ago: "We sang 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'' eight times a week, for over 1,000 shows, which is a lot. Every actor always has a side hustle—ours just happened to become a multimillion-dollar business."

STAGE BUSINESS

Before AKT, Andy Coxon and Ed Currie regularly appeared in London's West End



SINGULAR SENSATION
Currie (far left) in "One," the spectacular finale of *A Chorus Line*



LEADING MAN
Coxon in a revival of the Bock and Harnick musical *She Loves Me*

DOUBLE ACT
Currie in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*; Coxon in *West Side Story*

THE RISE OF THE SUPPER CLUB

The fastest way to understand a city is through its food

SUPPER CLUBS ARE the hottest tables in town. These dinner parties with a twist are now popping up in cities across the globe. Chefs and home cooks are serving curated menus to strangers in pop-up venues or even their own home. For the adventurous business traveler, not only will it beat room service, but you can get an insight into the city and its people at the same time. Here are five to whet your appetite.

STORY BY
CLAIRE TURRELL

ROSALYNN SUPPER CLUB, LOS ANGELES

Ex-tech professional Jasper Lynn loved to host friends for dinner. A pandemic passion project with chef friends turned into the Rosalynn Supper Club. It became so popular he now runs events up to four times a week at different pop-up locations around Los Angeles. The menu features Californian dishes with Asian flavors. Dishes that have won guests over include Wagyu *picanha* and cinnamon fried pink pineapple. The drinks are just as creative, as they upcycle used ingredients such as the lard from *ibérico* pork, which is fat-washed with bourbon. *$165 per person.* ***@rosalynnsupperclub***

> Dishes that have won guests over include Wagyu *picanha* and cinnamon fried pink pineapple.

ELEVEN98, LONDON

Chef Aidan Brooks came home to London's East End to launch the Eleven98 supper club. Each Friday, the sustainable chef serves 12 guests a tasting menu in his art-filled home. Each ingredient for this locavore menu comes from local farms or is foraged by Brooks. Guests are welcomed with a cocktail such as Respect Your Elders, which features foraged elderflowers and gin. A fresh menu is uploaded each week, but previous guests have been wowed by torched Manor House brassicas, *pangrattato* and mustard mayonnaise, followed by rhubarb cheesecake. *$105 per person.* ***eleven98.com***

THE SEWING TIN, NEW YORK CITY

Chefs Akhil Upad and Aditya Mishra both worked at Michelin-star restaurants in New York City but wanted to step out of the kitchen and connect with customers. The Sewing Tin supper club was born. They now serve South Asian food in creative spaces in Brooklyn. The club is named after the iconic Danish biscuit boxes that parents turned into sewing tins and left many a child in search of snacks disappointed. The chefs have chosen to refill these tins with tasty items for hungry guests, such as citrus-spiced salmon or *jhol momos*. Each six-course menu is paired with four equally delicious cocktails, such as a Chai Espresso Martini. *$195 per person.* ***the-sewingtin.com***

HAAWM, BANGKOK

Even Brit popstar Dua Lipa has popped into Haawm—the hottest supper club in Bangkok. It's run by self-taught Thai-American cook Dylan Eitharong, who whips up a sensational seven-course Thai menu. The vibe is so good other Thai chefs will drop by for collaborations. Dishes have included a southern Thai sour curry with tiger prawns and torch ginger flowers and green mango salad. Guests can bring their own bottles. *$85 per person.* ***@haawmbkk***

CHEF KUV'S SECRET SUPPER CLUB, DUBAI

Chef Kuv pioneered one of the first supper clubs in Dubai. The architect-turned-chef, who was born in Bahrain, hosts guests in his own home. His varied seven-course menus range from Lebanese to Caribbean cuisine. While guests don't know what they are going to eat, they can expect a table laden with flowers, themed books and candles. Guests often include repeat visitors as the ever-changing menus (270 so far) give people an excuse to go back. To help break the ice, chef Kuv encourages guests to bring a personal item they can chat about. *$108 per person.* ***@kuvsecretsuppers***

IMAGES SEBASTIAN GARCIA PHOTOGRAPHY; PHOTOSBYVANI; ELEVEN98; TUCKER IMAGES; KUV'S SECRET SUPPER CLUB; HAAWM

STORY BY **STEPHANIE VERMILLION**
ILLUSTRATION BY **RUSSELL COBB**

BALANCED DIET

Health Food

When it comes to skincare, resorts are proving you are what you eat

FROM SERUMS TO face masks, the average American spends hundreds of dollars on skincare each year. Yet lotions and potions are only *part* of the equation. Your diet is just as important, and this has recently taken the social media world by storm.

The trend, known as "eat your skincare," centers on consuming nutritious foods that bolster skin health from the inside out. "This is essentially a rebranded concept that once occurred naturally, back when soil-rich foods provided adequate vitamins, minerals and skin-building nutrients," says Angela Green, a longtime licensed aesthetician and author of the e-book *Nutrition for Healthy Skin*.

One of Green's biggest eat-your-skincare tips involves ditching all things processed. "When we consume packaged foods and beverages, the body can go days—or even weeks—without fruits and vegetables, which limits the absorption of minerals and hydration."

Additionally, opt for lean protein. Green says, "Fats from certain oils can make absorption difficult."

And while it's not eating, exercise is integral to skin health, too. "Moving your body supports metabolism and increases oxygen flow to the blood and tissues."

Eating greens, berries and low-fat proteins and staying active are well-known components of a healthy life. Yet jam-packed schedules and frequent work trips can make it easy to adopt bad habits. That's where wellness travel can lend a helping hand, with numerous resorts offering nutrition reboots that prioritize consuming skin-friendly ingredients while developing food routines you can take home.

Take **Six Senses**. The brand's Eat With Six Senses program helps guests consume food that's equal parts nutritious and delicious. Guests begin with a wellness screening, then receive a customized diet based on their goals and needs, such as more vibrant skin.

Many Six Senses escapes also incorporate natural and edible ingredients into their spa experiences via the Alchemy Bar Workshop. The experience, available in locations like Six Senses Kyoto, invite wellness seekers to gather and create their own products using medicinal herbs from an on-site garden. An in-house alchemist then helps patrons blend natural skincare products while learning about their herbal properties.

Beaverbrook hotel, Leatherhead, England

At **Mii Amo**, a resort set among the red rocks of Sedona, Arizona, guests can join a session with experts to examine their food choices and receive nutritional advice on how to achieve their overall wellness goals, such as skincare or strength-building. The property also offers experiences including morning yoga, cardio tennis and personal coaching.

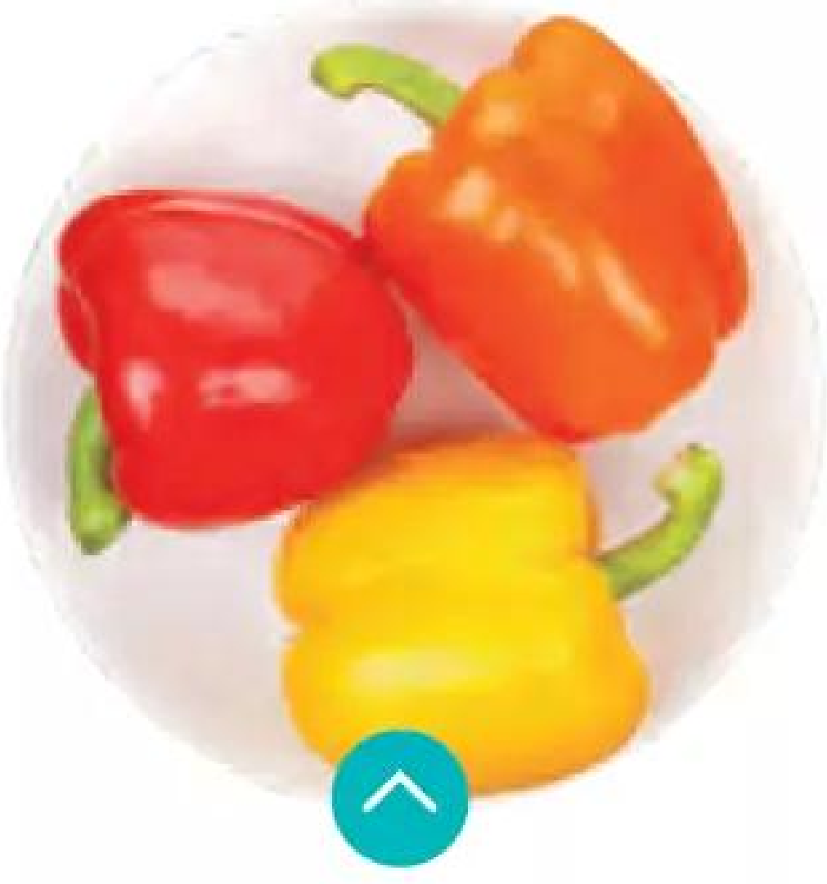
In bucolic Surrey, a county in England, the estate-style **Beaverbrook** hotel invites guests to work one-on-one with a naturopath. The topics run the gamut, using natural healing and nutrition to aid skin health or curb adrenal fatigue. Beaverbrook's Coach House Spa provides exercise, too, with hyperbaric oxygen therapy and vitamin IV infusions.

A working cattle ranch in southern Wyoming is home to one of America's most impressive getaways—and it's a great place to experiment with skincare. **Three Forks Ranch** partners with the Mayo Clinic to provide longevity-focused sessions. Guests can join cooking classes to learn how to consume more mindfully. Fitness classes, as well as the 12,000-square-foot spa, provide myriad opportunities to exercise and unwind, too.

3 ESSENTIAL EDIBLES

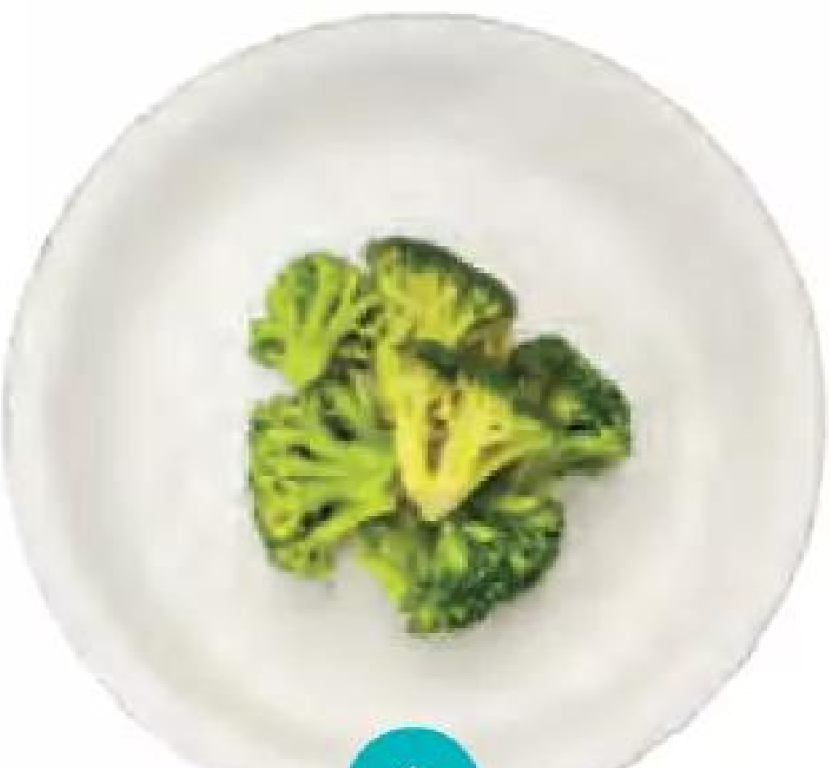
Mackerel

This oily fish is your skin's secret weapon. Enriched with omega-3s, it contains vitamin E, an antioxidant that protects against UV radiation and premature aging.



Bell Peppers

Skip the collagen creams and head to the produce aisle. The red and yellow varieties are packed with vitamins A and C, which stimulate collagen production that aids in plump skin.



Broccoli

The leafy vegetable is rich in lutein, an important antioxidant that protects the skin from sun damage. Our bodies don't naturally produce lutein, making broccoli a skin savior.

IMAGES **COURTESY OF BEAVERBROOK; ADOBE STOCK**

FALL MUST-VISITS

Tuscan Truffles, Sonoma Wines

An international list of stylish spots

Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco

53024 Montalcino, Italy

Truffles in Tuscany? *Bellissimo.* Although this 5,000-acre estate is a luxury treat year-round, this season enjoy a holiday complete with cooking classes and wine tours (the property is a producer of Brunello di Montalcino). Forty spacious suites and 11 private villas blend modern comforts with antique furnishings and tech-savvy touches. Home to one of Italy's most prestigious golf courses, this hotel is also ideal for your next corporate event. Save your appetite for Ristorante Campo del Drago and Osteria La Canonica.
rosewoodhotels.com

STORY BY
EDEN HERBSTMAN

Mayflower Inn and Spa

118 Woodbury Rd., Washington, CT

Here, autumn charm echoes through a roster of bucolic programming. This stately hotel in New England holds 30 individually designed rooms featuring canopied beds, period artworks and bright colors. Outside the comfortable accommodations, a bounty of fall pastimes await, such as an electric bike excursion for apple picking. The top-of-the-line spa is a recent partnership with The Well, offering enhanced treatments and a sprawling indoor heated pool.
auberge.com

Brach Madrid

Gran Vía 20, Madrid

Although it's located along one of Europe's busiest streets, this boutique property is where time slows down. The 57 rooms and common areas are furnished with a whimsy that comes alive through curious objects such as Spanish mandolins, boxing gloves and ceramic trinkets. Its present-day personality matches the flair of past inhabitants like Victor Hugo, mirroring the hotel's ethos of modern nostalgia. Dine at the hotel's grand café and seek restoration at wellness space La Capsule.
brachmadrid.com

Appellation Healdsburg

101 Dovetail Ln., Healdsburg, CA

Sonoma's flavors and milieu inspired this new brand, concieved by chef Charlie Palmer. Appellation's flagship offers 108 agrarian accommodations, furnished in wood tones with vineyard views. The culinary immersion begins at check-in with seasonal bites and refreshments. Palmer's on-site restaurants, Folia Bar & Kitchen and Andy's Beeline Rooftop, charm guests and locals. An abundance of event space also puts Appellation on the map for business gatherings.
appellationhotels.com

> A Thanksgiving brunch will be held in the ballroom.

Hotel Bourré Bonne

133 W Market St., Louisville, KY

In downtown Louisville, near the convention center, this hotel charms with hospitality and poppy vibrance. More than 160 rooms highlight city views and sophisticated comfort. Bourbon-centric and with equestrian nods—it is named for "good bet" in French—the property celebrates the city's culture. This month, celebrate with family or clients over a tableside cocktail cart. A Thanksgiving brunch will also be held in the ballroom. And head to the on-site steak house for bold flavors in an even bolder setting.
bourrebonne.com

IMAGES **ROSEWOOD CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO / DAVIDE LOVATTI; AUBERGE COLLECTION; EVOK COLLECTION / GUILLAUME DE LAUBIER; APPELLATION / EMMA KRUCH; HOTEL BOURRÉ BONNE**

SPONSORED CONTENT

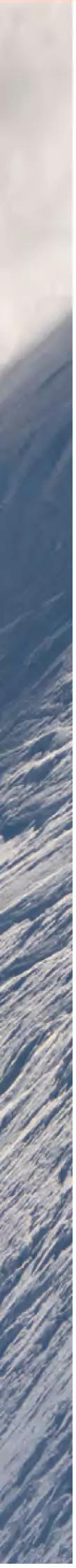
PEAK SEASON

With over three million acres of wide-open wilderness to explore, Mammoth Lakes, California is elevating ski vacations to extraordinary new heights

WHETHER YOU'RE A seasoned pro or you've yet to pull the tags off your fresh new ski gear, Mammoth Lakes offers an unforgettable experience both on and off the slopes. Boasting an average of 400+ inches of snow per season and over 300 days of sunshine every year, this west coast wonderland is a go-to for thrill-seekers all-year round, placing it in peak position on bucket lists all over the world. Framed by boundless acres of national forest, your adventures won't stop at the summit. Here, 140 miles of cross-country trails are yours to explore, with countless activities held for the après crowd, too. Early snowfall this year has jump-started the '25 season, so if you're thinking of taking to the slopes, Mammoth Lakes is the place to be.

STAY IN STYLE

Mammoth Lakes is a rural retreat, but that doesn't mean comfort is out of the equation. From luxury properties to charming motels and cozy cabins, there is a style for everyone. Prepare for a unique nature-first experience as you unwind beneath bluebird skies and overlook snowy mountain ridges. With your destination



> **‘Mammoth Lakes is one of the best natural retreats in the world’**

locked in, you can opt for a stress-free arrival with a shared or private shuttle service from the airport. Plus, for those traveling by car, there are plenty of convenient parking options.

AN UNREAL WORLD

The moment you arrive, it becomes clear why Mammoth Mountain deserves its grandiose name. Standing at over 11,000 feet with a 3,100 vertical drop, this is the highest chairlift-accessible ski resort in California, making it the obvious choice for getting in those incredible snowscape views. Paired with a signature California sunset, Mammoth Lakes offers a landscape like no other. An impressive 25 lifts and 180 trails service the mountain, with over 3,500 acres of skiable terrain divided into expert, advanced, intermediate and beginner territory. At Mammoth Mountain, no one is left behind at the lodge.

BEYOND MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

About half an hour north of Mammoth Lakes is June Mountain, another must-visit summit. With roughly half the skiable terrain of its sister resort, June Mountain provides a more relaxed, intimate skiing experience, perfect for those seeking space when starting out. Mammoth Lakes is much more than a skier’s paradise. There are so many ways to explore the area. From tubing at Woolly’s Adventure Summit to ice-skating at the Olympic-sized LA Kings Ice rink, there’s no end to the activities. If you’re looking for somewhere to start, the Town Loop multi-use pathway is a popular bet. This 7.8-mile, family-friendly route lets you explore Mammoth Lakes at your own pace, with the flexibility to choose sections that fit your itinerary.

APRÈS, YOUR WAY

There’s a reason everyone loves the slopes, and it’s not only to do with the skiing. Mammoth Lakes is known for having a great off-mountain atmosphere and activities that keep guests coming back season after season. After hitting the slopes, make sure to experience the après scene at The Mill at Mammoth Mountain and The Village at Mammoth, a walkable haven filled with shops, snacks and drinks to unwind after a thrilling day on the mountain. Plus, the town hosts a tight-knit community of restaurants and bars for you to enjoy. Whether you’re indulging in the ambiance of a restaurant like Shelter Distillery or enjoying a local brew at Mammoth Brewing Company, no two days in Mammoth Lakes are the same. Experience Mammoth like a local with Après Adventure Eats — where every activity comes with a crave-worthy pairing.

If you’re ready for the ultimate winter getaway, start planning your Mammoth Lakes trip at VisitMammoth.com

The seasoned skier’s checklist

Lift Tickets

Ikon Pass holders enjoy unlimited access to Mammoth Mountain. Alternatively, you can buy same-day lift tickets at the lodge or save by purchasing online in advance. Mammoth lift tickets also grant access to June Mountain - experience two mountains in one trip for a change of scenery.

The Mid-Week Sweet Spot

Thanks to its High Sierra climate, Mammoth Lakes boasts one of the longest ski seasons in the country — sometimes running right into July — so there’s truly never a bad time to visit. But if you’re here to hit the slopes, midweek is where it’s at: lower lift prices, shorter lines, and more runs to yourself. What’s not to love?

Stay in Style

Finding the right place to stay in Mammoth Lakes is easy, with options ranging from cozy cabins and slopeside condos to full-service hotels perfect for unwinding after a day on the mountain. And there’s exciting news for future visitors: the Limelight Mammoth is set to open in December 2025. With its modern design, inviting gathering spaces, and unbeatable location, it’s poised to become the go-to stay for travelers looking to experience Mammoth Lakes in style.

Mammoth Lakes
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2025 BUSINESS TRAVELER AWARDS

THE YEAR'S BEST AIRLINES, AIRPORTS, HOTELS AND TRAVEL SERVICES

FOR THE FIRST time, the *Business Traveler* Awards honor both the finest regional travel brands in North America and the very best in the world. This year's approach blends the insight of our passionate, informed readers with the expertise of a panel of leading judges. The response was extraordinary, with more than 95,000 votes cast across five territories. Regional winners are drawn from the public vote alone, while the global categories combine public and panel input to determine the ultimate accolades—a rigorous process ensuring every award reflects both traveler sentiment and industry excellence.

BEST AIRLINE IN THE WORLD

BEST BUSINESS CLASS IN THE WORLD

BEST ECONOMY CLASS IN THE WORLD

BEST FREQUENT FLYER PROGRAM IN THE WORLD

QATAR
A7-ANA
QATAR

QATAR AIRWAYS
QATAR AIRWAYS PRIVILEGE CLUB
QATAR AIRWAYS AL MOURJAN LOUNGES

The Doha-based airline is voted best in the skies—and on the ground

STORY BY **VINAY BHASKARA**

Qatar Airways emerged as this year's standout winner, capturing first place in five of the seven categories for which it was eligible. The carrier even earned indirect distinction through its home base at Doha Hamad International Airport—where it commands an 81-percent market share—which placed second behind Singapore Changi.

The passenger experience at Hamad is fundamentally shaped by Qatar Airways, whose transiting passengers define much of the airport's standards. Given the scale of its dominance, the only reason Qatar did not sweep the awards outright is its lack of a premium economy cabin, rendering it ineligible in that category.

A NEAR SWEEP AT THE TOP

For each category, the *Business Traveler* panel awarded a Top 5 ranking, and Qatar Airways was not the only carrier to make multiple appearances. Singapore Airlines, for instance, featured in seven of the eight eligible categories—missing only a lounge award—placing second in five and winning Best First Class while operating from the world's top-ranked airport.

Emirates also appeared in seven of eight categories, while Cathay Pacific appeared in five, and both Air New Zealand and Virgin Atlantic appeared in three apiece. Qatar Airways was therefore not alone in demonstrating broad, consistent excellence.

With the highest average rating overall, Qatar Airways' recognition as the World's Best Airline comes as little surprise. Still, it's worth examining whether the accolades are uniformly warranted.

LOUNGES WORTHY OF THE HYPE

When analyzed on a category-by-category basis, the defensibility of the awards varies. Take, for instance, the two Al Mourjan lounges at Doha Hamad International Airport. These are truly world-class facilities—spacious, architecturally striking and replete with fine dining, elegant design and first-rate amenities for premium passengers and elite Oneworld travelers in transit.

BEST AIRLINE LOUNGE IN THE WORLD

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The airline's first Airbus A350-1000; Al Mourjan lounge in Doha; signature caviar service in Business Class

IMAGES COURTESY OF QATAR AIRLINES

> Al Mourjan lounges set a gold standard worldwide.

The other winning lounges—Cathay Pacific's at Hong Kong, Virgin Atlantic's at Heathrow, Emirates' at Dubai, and Turkish Airlines' at Istanbul—each present strong cases for recognition (particularly Dubai, which uniquely allows passengers to board flights directly from the lounge). Still, the Al Mourjan lounges are justifiably considered best in class, offering a scale and sense of refinement that few rivals can match.

GOLD STANDARD IN BUSINESS CLASS

Similarly, Qatar's Qsuite Business Class remains a benchmark in the aviation industry. Since its debut in 2017, Qsuite has garnered acclaim as the finest business class product in the world, setting new standards for comfort and privacy. Each suite features sliding doors, lie-flat beds with high-end bedding, premium amenities, and exceptional onboard dining.

While some competitors have since introduced enclosed suites, one defining Qsuite innovation remains unmatched: its convertible center seats, which can be joined to create a double bed. This allows couples to sleep side by side—a feature otherwise found only in first class on select Singapore Airlines and China Eastern aircraft. For business class, it's unique.

"Being able to fly and fall asleep side by side with my wife was such a special way to kick off and finish our honeymoon together," said Ethan Robinson, a New York-based frequent flyer. "No other business class in the world offered us that."

Seasoned global traveler James He, a two-million-miler with American Airlines, echoed that sentiment, noting that Qatar's premium experience is far more than a seat. "Great food. Great amenities on board. Dine on demand. Diptyque high-end amenities. Pajamas," he said. "Qatar even has special immigration clearance for First and Business Class passengers upon arrival in Doha, plus a separate check-in counter exclusive to them—one that Oneworld status members can't access." These small but meaningful touches, He added, "make Qatar's premium cabin feel like it's on an entirely different level."

FREQUENT FLYER DEBATES

Qatar's recognition for Best Economy Class is also defensible, though not uncontested. Air New Zealand's innovative Skycouch—allowing passengers to convert a row of three economy seats into a makeshift bed—could arguably elevate its economy product above the rest, just as Qsuites distinguishes Qatar's Business Class.

If comfort and seat width were prioritized over service and amenities, Japanese carriers such as ANA and Japan Airlines might reclaim top positions thanks to their less dense configurations and wider seats.

Perhaps the most debatable win for Qatar Airways lies in its frequent flyer program, Privilege Club. By most objective measures—award availability on Qatar and its partners, redemption flexibility, elite benefits, and recognition—it falls short of several non-ranked competitors.

Programs such as Flying Blue, Aeroplan, AAdvantage and Atmos Rewards arguably outperform it across these metrics, making Privilege Club's placement at the top difficult to justify.

A DESERVING CHAMPION

Even if some individual category results invite debate, Qatar Airways' overall ranking as the World's Best Airline remains well earned.

The carrier consistently delivers a premium experience defined by exceptional service, luxurious lounges and innovative cabin design. In an era when global airlines are pushing boundaries in comfort and service, Qatar Airways continues to set the pace.

→

BEST
FIRST CLASS
IN THE
WORLD

SINGAPORE AIRLINES

An exquisite journey in a "hotel room in the sky"

STORY BY **RAMSEY QUBEIN**

First class is making a comeback, driven by intense competition and innovation in onboard products and ground experiences. And no airline does it better than Singapore Airlines (SIA), which constantly evolves its offerings to keep pace with the latest passenger trends and expectations. This year's winner of the World's Best First Class has become the gold standard that other airlines strive for when it comes to consistent service. "Thanks to the warmth and attentive service of the world's most awarded cabin crew, SIA remains focused on making our passengers feel a sense of care and comfort whenever they fly with us," says David Lau, SIA's vice president of the Americas.

The carrier backs up its trademark hospitality with an unrivaled cabin, especially the Suites on its Airbus A380s, where passengers can don Lalique loungewear to enjoy in either their swiveling recliner, featuring Poltrona Frau leather, or a separate bed, wrapped in luxury linens, behind closed doors. It's even possible to connect two Suites for a couple. In the bathrooms, flyers find sit-down vanity counters with exclusive beauty products. This true hotel room in the sky is available on flights to cities like Frankfurt, Hong Kong, London, Paris and Tokyo, among others. "This award affirms our commitment to product innovation, underscored by our forthcoming $852 million retrofit program to deliver an unparalleled travel experience for our customers," says Mohamed Rafi Mar, SIA's general manager for the United Kingdom.

The airline pioneered the current model of preordering meals for passengers with its Book the Cook service, which offers more than a dozen choices that can be catered onboard. While lobster thermidor and Singapore chicken rice are perennial favorites, the culinary team taps world-renowned chefs to add more dishes of top quality. U.S. in-flight menus are designed in tandem with Golden Door spa to provide wellness-focused options, suited for the ultra-long-haul missions its planes fly.

Even the salads it serves on some flights use nutrition-packed microgreens sourced from indoor vertical farms, often not far from its catering facilities, to assure farm-to-plane-fresh ingredients. The thousands of champagne bottles served each year on its flights are selected by wine experts who fly to the top French champagne houses such as Krug or Taittinger for taste tests. There are few other airlines in the world where a first class passenger gets to choose between a glass of Krug or Taittinger (or both) before takeoff, always poured at their seat. And it is the only airline in the world to serve Louis Roederer Cristal champagne in its Suites and First Class cabins. A team of more than 130 Air Sommeliers—flight crew who have spent years taking accredited courses and earning high-level certifications—serves the onboard wine list, both of which are features that few other airlines can match.

At its Changi Airport home base, passengers in the First Class and Private Room lounges can order a glass of Rare by Charles Heidsieck, a cuvée that has only been produced approximately a dozen times in the champagne brand's history when the growing conditions are absolutely perfect. "Singapore's newer First cabins almost single-handedly redefined expectations around privacy and space in commercial aviation, forcing other brands to elevate their offerings accordingly," says *Business Traveler* Awards judge Gilbert Ott, founder of website *God Save the Points*. "The soft touches around food, beverage and exquisite predeparture experiences make this a journey to relish every time."

FROM ABOVE First Class Suite onboard the Airbus A380; Poltrona Frau swiveling recliner

It is the only airline to serve Louis Roederer Cristal champagne.

IMAGES **COURTESY OF SINGAPORE AIRLINES/FLASHFILM**

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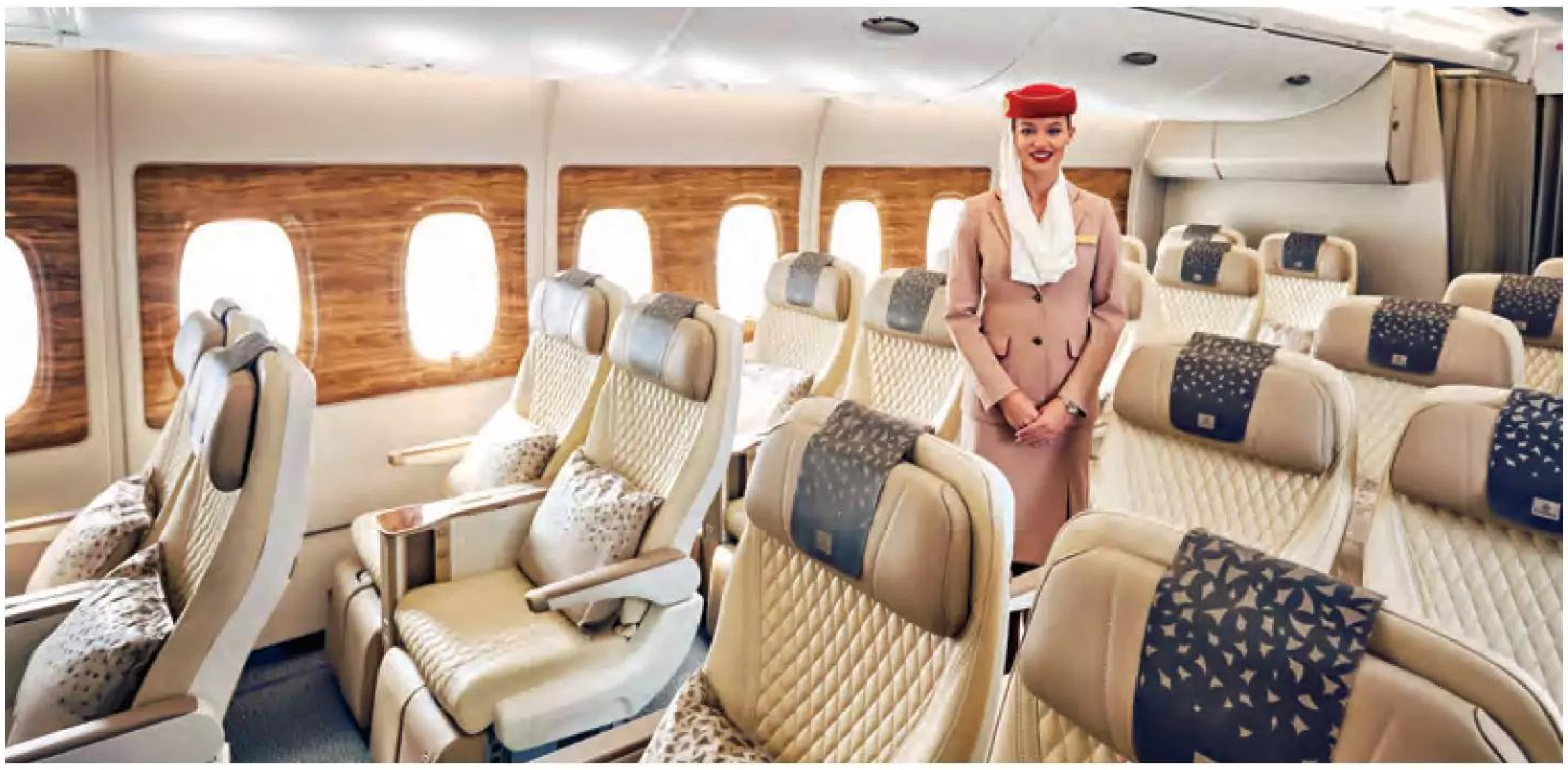
BEST PREMIUM ECONOMY CLASS IN THE WORLD

EMIRATES

STORY BY **ENRIQUE PERRELLA**



Premium Economy cabin on the Airbus A380

> Crew attention isn't spread thin, and the product feels curated.

FOR AN AIRLINE known for pushing boundaries in First and Business Class, winning Best Premium Economy in the World underscores how Emirates has translated its culture of innovation into a cabin designed for travelers looking for a refined experience without the premium price tag.

What makes this cabin so compelling is not a single feature but rather a collection of deliberate choices that together create a surprisingly seamless product.

Consider the seat: It is 19.5 inches wide with a 40-inch pitch and reclines into a cradle position. That's expected in this segment, but Emirates didn't stop at dimensions. It added stitched cream leather upholstery, polished wood cocktail tables and a cabin palette in champagne and wood tones. In short, it feels more like a boutique hotel than a middle-tier airline seat.

This layering of comfort and design signals Emirates' belief that Premium Economy isn't an "in-between" option. It's a stand-alone product.

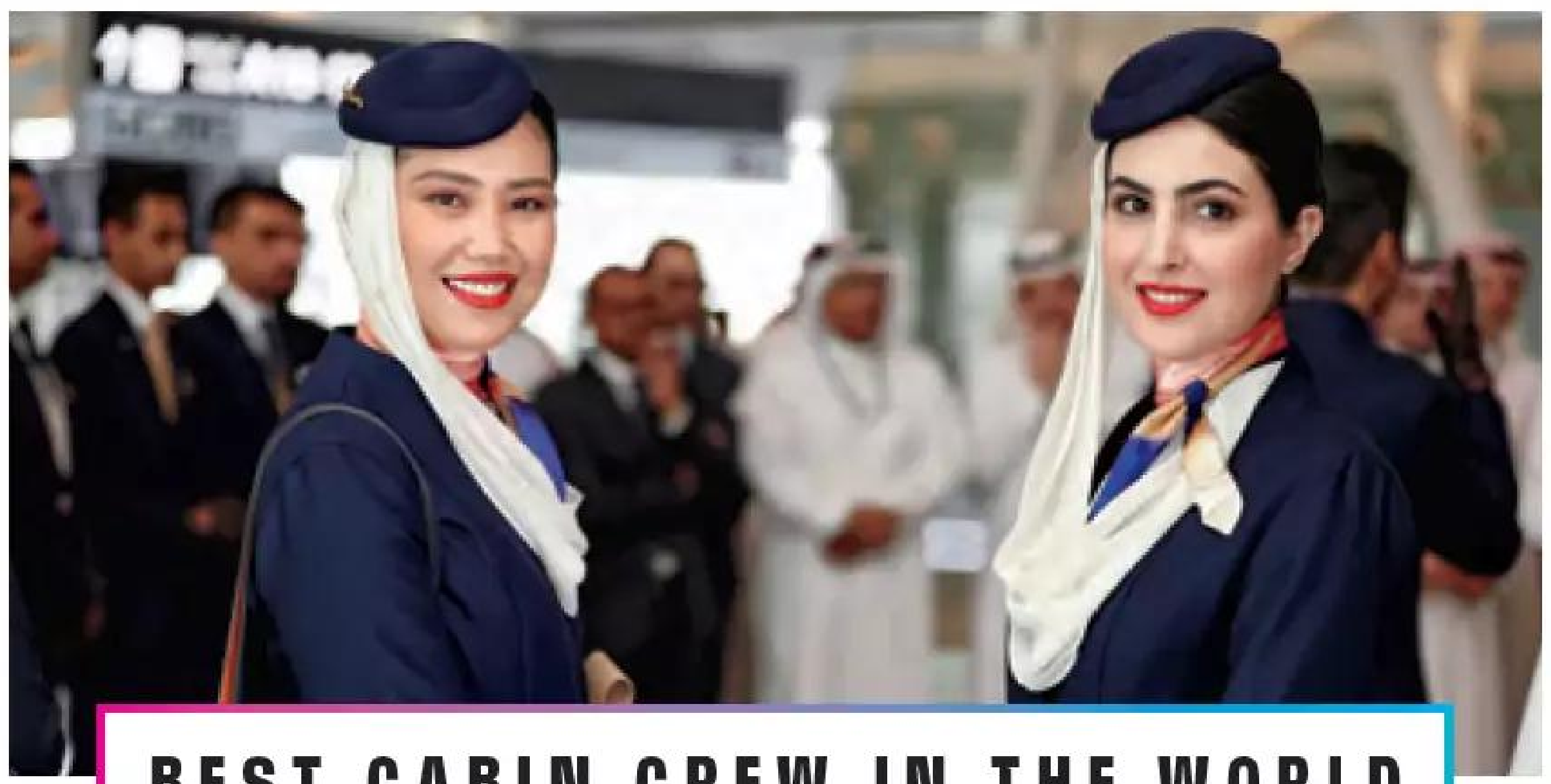
Equally notable is how Emirates has imported elements from its Business Class playbook. Passengers are greeted with a drink in fine glassware, followed by towel service. Menus rotate monthly and meals are served on Royal Doulton china with stainless-steel cutlery.

Even celebrations have been considered: For $43, passengers can order a cake-and-champagne package, complete with Moët & Chandon.

One aspect that rarely comes up in casual comparisons is staffing. Emirates assigns three multilingual cabin attendants dedicated exclusively to Premium Economy on every flight.

Some of the most unique details come from sustainability efforts. Amenity kits arrive in washable kraft paper pouches printed with soy ink. Socks and eyeshades are made from rPET, a recycled plastic. Blankets are woven from recycled bottles yet designed to feel plush.

Emirates' win reflects the airline's strategy of building a Premium Economy that isn't a diluted version of business class, but a coherent product of its own. In the words of frequent flyers, it's not simply about "more legroom"—it's about an experience that feels thoughtfully complete.



BEST CABIN CREW IN THE WORLD

SAUDIA AIRLINES

STORY BY **ENRIQUE PERRELLA**

FOR THE second year running, Saudia has claimed the Best Cabin Crew award, a milestone that puts the Saudi national carrier in the spotlight. Chief guest experience officer Rossen Dimitrov said that recent passenger experience initiatives reflect the airline's commitment to rigorous training, blending precision with genuine Saudi warmth and aligning with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 strategy to boost tourism. Yet while awards spotlight progress, they also underscore ongoing challenges: Middle Eastern carriers face fierce regional competition, and consistent operational performance remains a key measure for frequent travelers. This award is an encouraging sign, reflecting ambition and potential and offering a telling example of how regional carriers leverage awards to shape global perception.

IMAGES **COURTESY OF EMIRATES; SAUDIA AIRLINES**

BEST AIRLINE ALLIANCE

HSBC
STAR ALLIANCE
VISA

STAR ALLIANCE

Why the network continues to set the standard

STORY BY **GEORGE GOMEZ**

For nearly three decades, Star Alliance has set the benchmark for global airline partnerships. Winning Best Airline Alliance is less about longevity and more about the way it continues to shape the passenger journey.

With 25 airlines across six continents and 17.4 percent of global air travelers passing through its network, the alliance is not just the biggest—it also remains the most impactful.

SEAMLESS JOURNEYS

Star Alliance's defining strength lies in its ability to make multi-airline itineraries feel like one continuous journey. Frequent travelers know the value of seamless seat selection, a seemingly small detail that often determines the comfort of long-haul connections. Today, the alliance covers 80 percent of interline itineraries with unified seat booking through a single airline app, saving passengers time and alleviating frustration.

Another quiet but significant innovation is baggage tracking across carriers. For those connecting on complex itineraries, knowing exactly where a checked bag is—especially when delayed—has become a major driver of passenger satisfaction. "We believe the true test of customer service isn't whether challenges arise, but how effectively they're managed," says Theo Panagiotoulias, CEO of Star Alliance. "That philosophy guides our investments in digital solutions that simplify and reassure the traveler at every step."

FROM ABOVE
HSBC Star Alliance credit card; branded jet

The alliance covers 80 percent of interline itineraries with unified seat booking through one app.

LOUNGES, RAIL AND REAL VALUE

For business travelers, ground experience matters as much as time in the air. The alliance has invested selectively in its branded lounges—opening locations in Los Angeles, Paris and most recently Guangzhou—focusing on cities where a unified space adds genuine value.

Its pioneering partnership with Deutsche Bahn in Germany highlights another differentiator: intermodal travel. By allowing passengers to book rail and air on a single ticket, Star Alliance blends flexibility with sustainability, replacing short flights where high-speed trains make sense.

STAYING RELEVANT

The alliance has not been without challenges, losing longtime members SAS and Asiana. Yet its ability to maintain strong coverage in Scandinavia and Korea, while preparing to welcome ITA Airways in 2026, underscores its adaptability.

With major anchors such as Lufthansa, United, Singapore Airlines, ANA and Turkish Airlines, Star Alliance continues to balance stability with growth.

THE WINNING FORMULA

Awards alone do not define success, but Star Alliance's win at the 2025 *Business Traveler* Awards reflects what frequent flyers value most: predictability, consistency and convenience.

From unified booking and baggage tracking to curated lounges and intermodal innovation, the alliance demonstrates that global travel doesn't have to feel fragmented. For millions of travelers worldwide, Star Alliance is proof that an alliance can be more than a network—it can be a seamless journey.

STAR ALLIANCE

IMAGES COURTESY OF STAR ALLIANCE

BEST THIRD-PARTY LOUNGE IN THE WORLD

CHASE SAPPHIRE, LAGUARDIA

Offering private suites, arcades and N.Y. cuisine

STORY BY **JACLYN TROP**

Upon entering Chase Sapphire's largest lounge, you could be forgiven for thinking you were in a luxury hotel and not at LaGuardia Airport. For its flagship site, Chase Sapphire challenged New York- and Dallas-based design firms ICRAVE and Corgan to create a space that would expand travelers' perceptions and expectations of modern air travel. Open daily from 4:30 a.m. until 9:30 p.m., the lounge is designed as a haven for travelers to relax, work and dine inside bustling Terminal B.

The open floor plan, spanning 21,850 square feet across two levels, evokes a high-end hotel outfitted in clean neutrals, soothing blues and festive pops of red and purple. Modern and spacious, the lounge features art curated by the JPMorgan Chase Art Collection and pumps Chase's signature Sapphire scent to invoke a sense of serenity in harried travelers.

With a dual focus on comfort and convenience, the lounge provides ample power outlets and seating for groups or solo travelers. Visitors can choose from a variety of configurations, with cozy booths, couches and armchairs aplenty.

The lounge also features a digital ordering system that allows travelers to select food and drinks directly from their seat by scanning a QR code. They can also book a complimentary 30-minute facial treatment by Face Haus in the lounge's dedicated wellness area.

Access is complimentary for Chase Sapphire Reserve and J.P. Morgan Reserve cardholders, along with two guests each. Priority Pass holders are granted one free visit per year. Guests or additional visits cost $75. Non-Priority Pass holders pay $100 to enter.

While the lounge maintains a hushed quality, visitors can let loose and blow off steam in the lounge's speakeasy arcade, a vintage-themed game room tucked behind a thick velvet curtain. The room is replete with retro-themed armchairs, a jukebox with a selection of records, shuffleboard table, pinball machine and a photo booth.

FROM ABOVE Reserve Suite; arcade

Travelers looking for privacy can visit the lounge's Reserve Suites, Chase's lounge-within-a-lounge concept. For a fee, Chase Sapphire Reserve cardmembers can access a dedicated suite with exclusive menus and signature caviar service.

Each suite features bespoke artwork, soft velvet furniture and private bathrooms with rainfall showers, plush bathrobes and Augustinus Bader and Oribe products. The two larger suites cost $3,000 for a three-hour period. A smaller suite costs $2,200.

These are the types of flourishes that Chase hopes will redefine luxury travel. "Through engineering feats to create a double-volume space, this transformation sets a new standard in lounge and airport hospitality," says Chris Gwilliam, senior vice president of global business development at Airport Dimensions, a Plano, Texas-based firm that partnered with Chase Sapphire to design the lounge. With its dynamic energy and bold design, the lounge represents the aim to continually reimagine the airport experience, according to Dana Pouwels, head of airport lounge benefits and strategic partnerships for JPMorgan Chase.

For dining, Chase Sapphire has applied its typical approach, sourcing high-quality local food and drink options. Travelers can enjoy complimentary meals, snacks and beverages such as made-to-order dishes by West Village bistro Joseph Leonard, specialty coffee from Joe Coffee Company, and inventive cocktails at a full-service bar.

Fairfax, another West Village eatery, crafted the dining menu, which includes a variety of meals rotated seasonally.

The 360-degree bar anchoring the lounge serves an extensive wine list curated by Parcelle and cocktails by Apotheke, a popular bar in New York. The signature Sapphire cocktail is a blend of gin or vodka, blueberry and goldenberry juices, lime, ginger, bee pollen and a mix of spices.

Business Traveler Awards judge Gilbert Ott prizes the lounge's experience, which can range from enjoying caviar with friends in a private suite to consuming a variety of top-notch food and drink at the bar. "For a lounge that anyone can access via a credit card, it's very, very well done."

Reserve Suites cost up to $3,000, offering caviar service and private bathrooms.

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BEST AIRPORT IN THE WORLD

SINGAPORE CHANGI AIRPORT

Beyond its renowned attractions and design, this hub continues to innovate and improve the passenger experience

STORY BY **RAMSEY QUBEIN**

IMAGES PANG YUHAO/UNSPLASH, CHANGI AIRPORT GROUP

FROM LEFT The world-famous Jewel and its iconic waterfall; Dreamscape, in Terminal 2, features 20,000 plants representing more than 100 species; *Steel in Bloom* sculpture in Terminal 4

It's no surprise that Singapore Changi has been named the World's Best Airport for the fourth consecutive year. The Southeast Asian hub is well-known for its easy transit experience, the lush Jewel complex and pristine ambiance. Never resting on its laurels, though, it is transforming into an airport of the future as it installs passenger-friendly and tech upgrades while breaking ground on a new Terminal 5 this year (set to open in the 2030s).

These days, it takes approximately 10 seconds to clear departure immigration (60-percent faster than before), thanks to its passport-less biometric clearance system designed for both Singaporeans and foreign visitors. By using facial and iris scans to speed up the process, travelers have time to shop, relax or enjoy lounges at all four of its terminals. And that's just what Singapore-based Aaron Wong loves about the airport. "It's probably the only airport in the world where you can disembark from an aircraft and be in a taxi within 15 minutes (my personal best is around 13 minutes)," he says.

Wong, who founded travel blog *The MileLion*, also notes that while Star Alliance member Singapore Airlines is based there, Changi has a wide array of fantastic lounges. If you have enough time and access, he says, you can create your own "lounge-hopping safari," visiting several for a progressive dinner while exploring the airport.

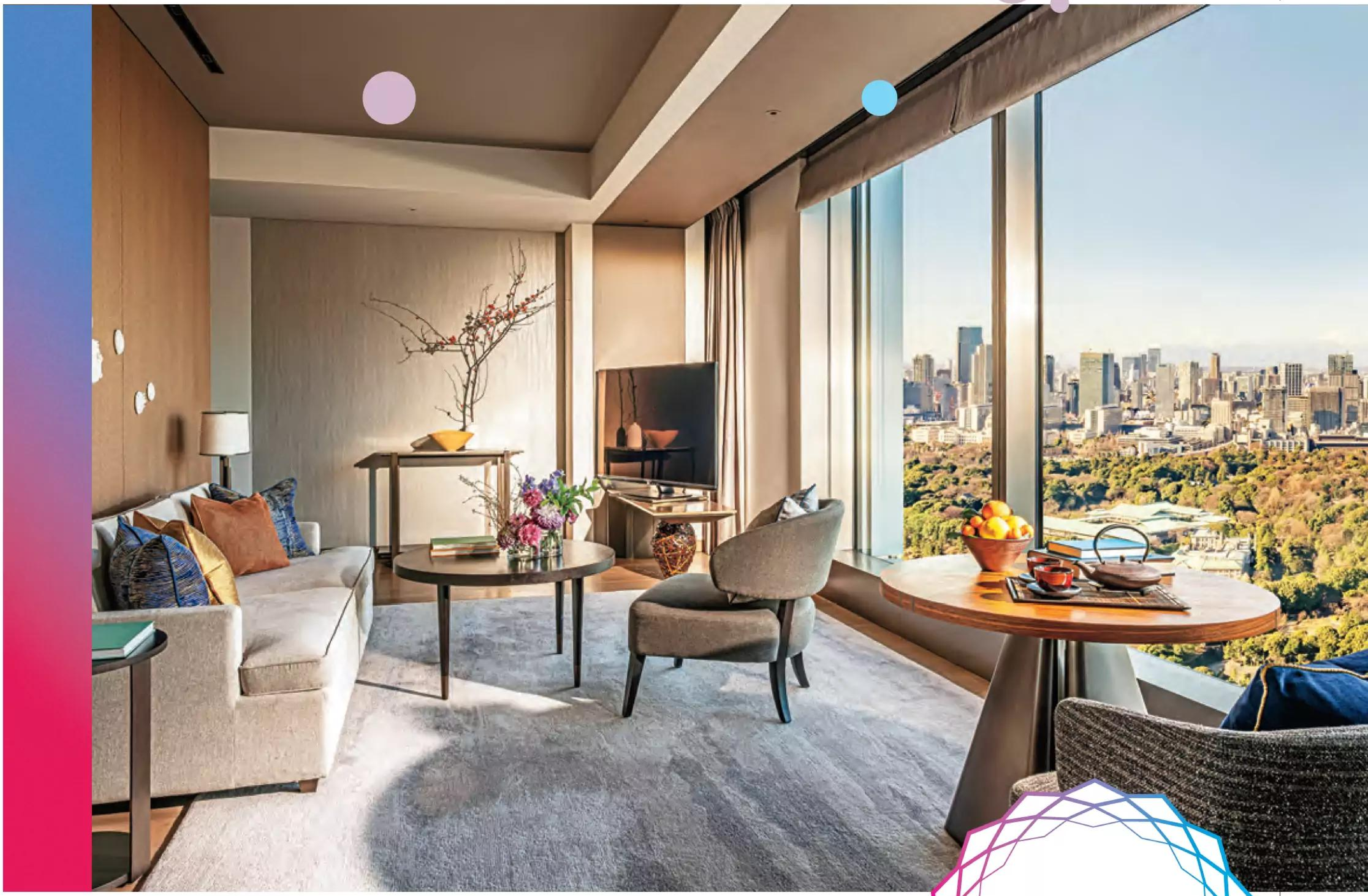
But that's not all. More than $2 billion is being invested to upgrade the airport and enhance everything from its baggage and check-in systems to Skytrain connections between terminals. This includes a rooftop baggage conveyance system that will add another way to move bags between terminals, relieving pressure on the existing belts. With Asia-Pacific travel demand estimated to grow significantly over the next few decades, Singapore is preparing its facilities to handle next-generation aircraft not yet in use today.

> It takes approximately 10 seconds to clear departure immigration.

There are even new custom-made ceiling robots nimble enough to crawl into small nooks and crannies to inspect and photograph potential problems, like leaks or electrical issues, which humans might not be able to easily access. The smallest device is the size of a banana. This technology has saved the airport countless hours of man power and expense and is becoming a poster child for the use of operational artificial intelligence that other airports can follow.

That's not to mention the team of smiley-faced robots that clean the terminals day and night. There's also Changi Airport's new AI-driven Aircraft 360 concept. It monitors potential flight delays and uses real-time, predictive analysis to improve how the airport assigns gates for faster turnaround times. It also makes better use of staffing (such as ground handlers and caterers), boosting efficiency and minimizing further delays to avoid any domino effect for later flights.

Changi has proven that it is a symbol of innovation in the aviation world while also becoming a source of national pride for locals.



BEST LUXURY HOTEL BRAND IN THE WORLD

FOUR SEASONS HOTELS AND RESORTS

From Japan to Spain, business executives prefer this sophisticated brand

STORY BY **MELINDA SHECKELLS**

After a long day of business travel—airports, time zones, endless emails, video calls, meetings and circle backs—there's no greater comfort than arriving at the check-in desk and, within a few flawless minutes, flipping on the lights in your suite. The experience is familiar, luxurious, quiet and intentional—everything a busy person craves.

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts stands at the pinnacle of sophisticated, intelligent hospitality, embodying the very buzzwords executives toss around within their own organizations. The brand is a true North Star, anchored by purpose-driven leadership and an uncanny ability to attract top talent. It crafts hyper-personalized experiences and delivers a frictionless journey at every touchpoint, redefining its mission every day through a relentless focus on the guest.

Named to honor the brand philosophy set forth by founder Isadore Sharp, which provides high-quality hotel experiences regardless of the time of year, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has expanded to five continents with 133 properties. Through this global footprint, the brand meets its customers where they need to be, every step of the way. Here, some favorite Four Seasons hotels around the world and the times of year when they are best for business travel.

SPRING

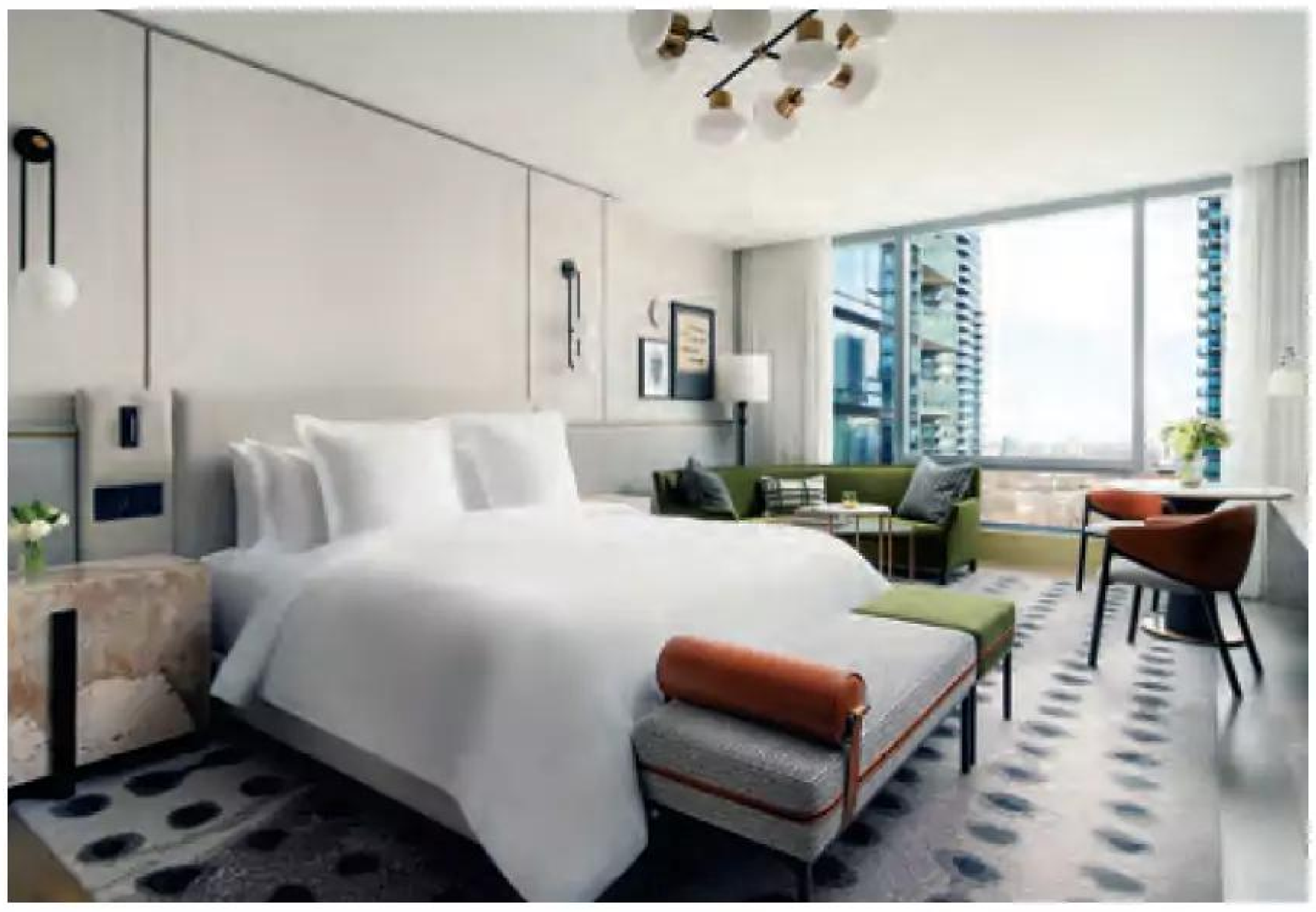
Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Otemachi

APRIL IS A busy time in Japan, as it coincides with the peak of cherry blossom season. Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Otemachi is the city's top choice for business travelers, offering an experience that feels like another world. Otemachi features a gourmet dining terrace as well as 190 guest rooms. Floor-to-ceiling windows, provide a hypnotic look at the skyline: Even if you're busy with work, it's easy to feel like you're exploring the city.

SUMMER

Four Seasons Hotel Toronto

ANCHORING THE YORKVILLE neighborhood, this flagship property sets the tone for how executives navigate the world: efficient, elegant and purpose-driven. Check-in happens in a heartbeat. Plush bedding aids recovery. It's a delight to have breakfasts, lunches and dinners at Café Boulud. Add in Four Seasons' intuitive service, and you have the rare business hotel that's as productive as it is restorative.



Four Seasons is the pinnacle of intelligent hospitality.

FALL

Four Seasons Hotel Madrid

COMBINING THE OLD World with the New, Four Seasons Hotel Madrid is situated within seven impeccably restored baroque landmark buildings. The location itself exudes both financial pulse and cultural energy. To decompress after a hectic workday, executives flock to the four-story wellness center, host business dinners at chef Dani García's signature restaurant, and close deals over dry martinis at Isa cocktail bar.

WINTER

Sensei Lanai, A Four Seasons Resort

ESCAPE TO THE Hawaiian island of Lanai at the exclusive enclave Sensei Lanai, A Four Seasons Resort. Don't consider it a reset—think of it as a new way of life. The resort's five-night Rest and Reset program, which uses biometric data to create an actionable plan, is a dream for anyone who struggles with sleep. Created with executives in mind, the program offers a journey featuring meditation classes and dining by Nobu.

IMAGES **COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS; ROBB AARON GORDON**

BEST UPSCALE HOTEL BRAND IN THE WORLD

ANDAZ HOTELS

STORY BY **LARK GOULD**

ANDAZ
SINGAPORE

ANDAZ HOTELS REIGNS supreme as the Best Upscale Hotel Brand in the World—not because it shouts luxury, but because it hums it. Its 30 boutique-style properties in 18 countries blur the line between elegance and ease. Each hotel channels a spirit of place, from the art-lined corridors of West Hollywood to the ocean-brushed edges of Papagayo.

Its newest global campaign, Be Like No One's Watching, captures that spirit: travel without pretense, personal style at the helm, as its Hindi moniker conveys. Guests are immersed in living galleries of local culture, where the lobby might double as a studio space, and a cocktail hails from a neighborhood poet. "Our luxury and lifestyle brands' expansion in new and key markets is driven by our desire to offer travelers more opportunities to explore the unique communities our hotels are a part of," say Crystal Vinisse Thomas, global brand leader for Hyatt's luxury and lifestyle brands.

The Andaz secret revolves around a delicate balance: global yet grounded, luxurious yet personal. From Lisbon to Shanghai to Miami Beach, Andaz proves that upscale hospitality does not have to be staged. It just has to feel real.

Guests are immersed in living galleries of local culture.

BEST BUDGET HOTEL BRAND IN THE WORLD

COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT

STORY BY **LARK GOULD**

COURTYARD
BY MARRIOTT

COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT takes this year's title for Best Budget Hotel Brand in the World—a victory for smart value on a global scale. With a massive footprint of more than 1,300 hotels in 60 countries, Courtyard delivers a reliably modern experience, from redesigned lobbies with media pods and Bistro bars to guest rooms engineered for productivity.

The brand proves "budget" no longer means a compromise. Rather, it means a savvy premium for travelers everywhere, whether in Mecca (where the world's largest Courtyard opens next year) or Montana. And "reliable" does not mean boring. The brand is in the midst of an evolution, shedding no-frills for smart-casual: Think urban-inspired rest and work spaces, cozy firepits and The Bistro for a proper meal and martini. "As the pioneer among select service brands, Courtyard continues to adapt to the changing ways that guests live, work and play," says Diana Plazas-Trowbridge, Marriott's chief lodging product officer for North America.

Courtyard was literally designed through its core audience in 1983. Rooms are intelligently crafted with plush bedding, flexible workspaces, large swivel TVs—delivering the essentials, with a touch of style.

IMAGES ADOBE STOCK

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BEST CAR RENTAL COMPANY IN THE WORLD

AVIS

STORY BY **JEREMY TAYLOR**

AVIS OPERATES APPROXIMATELY 5,500 locations in 170 countries—so what iconic road trip would you choose to experience in an Avis car? An ideal choice might be Route 66, one of America's first continuous stretches of highway. The "Mother Road" served as a path for those who migrated to the West and today attracts adventurous drivers from around the world.

Stretching some 2,448 miles to Santa Monica, your Route 66 journey starts at one of ten Avis locations in Chicago. Ponder over a selection of the latest models, ranging from a full-size SUV such as the Ford Expedition to a budget-friendly Kia Rio to an all-American Jeep Wrangler.

Avis offers all-electric cars, too, but whatever you choose, be sure that you're covered on your epic journey to California. The company offers a range of insurance options, plus the reassurance of 24/7 roadside assistance.

Route 66 is a magnificent drive that offers an insight into the soul of America. Avis allows drivers to experience this journey in true comfort.

> Stretching some 2,448 miles to Santa Monica, your Route 66 journey starts in Chicago.

BEST LUGGAGE BRAND IN THE WORLD

SAMSONITE

STORY BY **LAURIE BROOKINS**

SAMSONITE IS CELEBRATING its 115th anniversary this year, having been founded in 1910 by luggage salesman Jesse Shwayder in Denver as a trunk manufacturer. Chief in the did-you-know? department: Samsonite's name was derived from the biblical character Samson to epitomize the strength of its suitcases. Fast-forward to 2025, and the brand is still emphasizing strength while embracing elements essential to today's travelers.

In September Samsonite launched Paralux, a seven-piece collection crafted primarily of sustainable materials with features that optimize packing. "This launch represents the best of Samsonite: pioneering design, sustainable innovation and a deep understanding of how people move through the world," says Kyle Gendreau, CEO of Samsonite.

The runners-up in the luggage category shouldn't surprise any frequent traveler—like Samsonite, each puts an emphasis on durability. Rimowa long has been a favorite for the iconic look of its aluminum cases, and its latest debut, Groove, is a collection of tech and lifestyle accessories that takes its cue from the brand's signature design motif. Tumi, meanwhile, celebrated its 50th anniversary this year with a collection of gold cases in its 19 Degree collection, which promptly sold out.

Samsonite Paralux Large Spinner in Stone Grey

IMAGES **ADOBE STOCK; SAMSONITE**

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Seaglass is a luxury island enclave offering every advantage of its Vero Beach island locale. This charming neighborhood has been designed around existing towering hardwood trees and native palms, and enhanced by a picturesque central lake. Seaglass presents an Old-Florida feel mere steps from the beach, where residents enjoy deeded access and an exclusive, resident-only beach club. The club, sure to be the hub of social living at Seaglass, features a fitness center, game tables, a spacious sundeck, boardwalk to the beach, and more.

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BEST HOTEL LOYALTY PROGRAM IN THE WORLD

MARRIOTT BONVOY

STORY BY **JAKE JONES**

WITH OVER 9,000 properties and 1.7 million rooms worldwide, Marriott Bonvoy boasts the largest global footprint among hotel groups, offering travelers extensive lodging options across 36 brands, including The Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis and JW Marriott.

What can you do with 150,000 points? Quite a lot, actually. One of the program's standout features is the Stay for 5, Pay for 4 perk, granting a fifth night free when redeeming points. This makes aspirational stays more attainable, such as five nights at The Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur (148,000 points) or Jakarta (120,000 points). In South America, the JW Marriott Quito (120,000 points) and The Westin Lima (136,000 points) offer exceptional value for extended stays in vibrant, culture-rich cities.

Earning elite status is also straightforward: Marriott Bonvoy Titanium Elite requires just 35-45 qualifying nights per year with the right co-branded credit cards. Benefits include a 75-percent points bonus, lounge access, complimentary breakfast at select brands, and automatic United Premier Silver and Hertz Five Star status.

Marriott's strength lies in its unmatched reach and range—but does Bonvoy truly deserve the top spot? Many argue that World of Hyatt remains the smarter program. Its fixed redemption chart consistently delivers better value, with five-star properties like the Park Hyatt St. Kitts costing as little as 100,000 points for four nights—less than a single night at many Bonvoy resorts. Hyatt's Globalist status also outshines Titanium Elite with perks such as free suite upgrades, waived resort fees and the ability to share status through its Guest of Honor feature.

ELITE MEMBER
MARRIOTT BONVOY
HELLO AGAIN
The world is yours. Make the most of your elevated benefits.
ELITE

One of the program's standout features is the Stay for 5, Pay for 4 perk.

BEST TRAVEL APP IN THE WORLD

BOOKING.COM

STORY BY **CALUM MCSWIGGAN**

Six reasons to use Booking.com

As a full-time travel writer and creator, I'm always on the road and I've racked up over 100 bookings through Booking.com this year alone. Here are six reasons why it's my go-to travel provider, and tips on how I get the most out of its award-winning app.

❶

GENIUS LOYALTY

Booking.com's loyalty program, Genius, offers perks like free breakfast, free upgrades and up to 20 percent off selected stays. It doesn't require a huge financial commitment, either, as it's based on number of bookings rather than spend. You can start receiving discounts from the moment you join the program.

❷

EVERYTHING IN ONE PLACE

Unlike many other apps, with Booking.com you can book everything from hotels and flights to attractions, taxis and rental cars in one easy interface—which means no more searching your emails for several different bookings.

❸

OFFLINE ACCESS

You can access all your bookings within the app without being connected to the Internet—perfect for checking your itinerary mid-flight, or preparing for immigration questions about your accommodation before you've sorted a local SIM.

Booking.com

❹

TRAVEL PROUD

Booking.com offers free LGBT+ inclusivity training to accommodation providers around the world. With over 100,000 properties now enrolled in the program, you can see which properties are proud to welcome LGBT+ guests by looking for the rainbow suitcase within the app.

❺

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BEST PRICING WORLDWIDE

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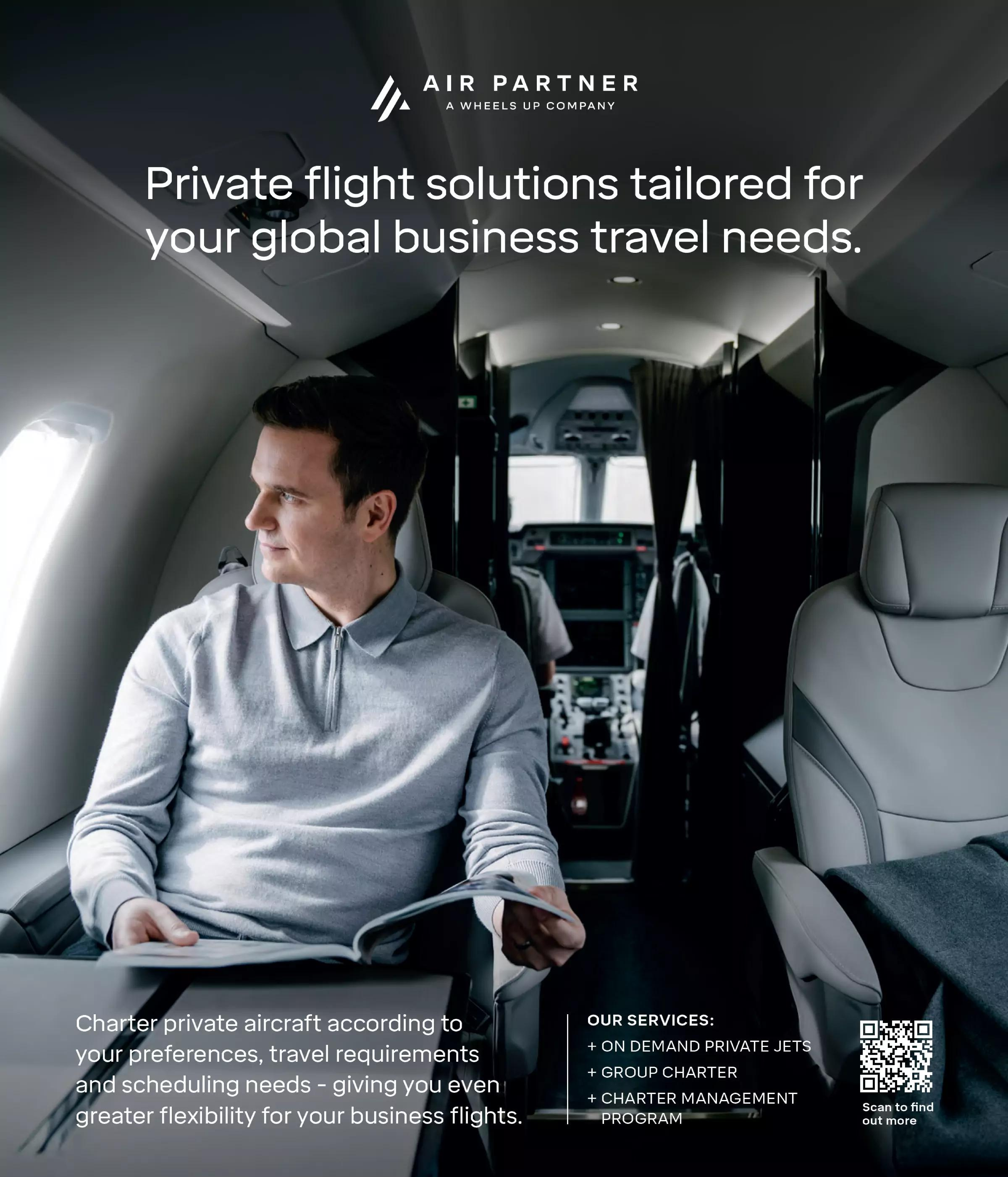

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BEST SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

THE DATAI LANGKAWI

STORY BY **TOM OTLEY**

NESTLED IN A lush rainforest, The Datai Langkawi has always been close to nature, and in 2020 the resort ramped up its environmental stewardship with The Datai Pledge. Designed to both protect Langkawi Island's unique ecosystems and support its local communities, it's a "promise to maintain a deep commitment to our rainforest, our ocean, our wildlife and our people." Over the past five years, the resort has made remarkable progress in both aims, and demonstrated that luxury and sustainability are compatible and inseparable.

Human Impact

As part of the Pledge, The Datai partnered with local enterprises The Kanshalife Project and Suri Lifestyle. Both initiatives support community members by creating meaningful employment in the form of transforming hotel waste materials such as linens, towels and slippers into new products like stools, cushions and artisan crafts. In 2024, 10,862 upcycled candles were created—a 111-percent increase from the previous year.

> Luxury and sustainability are compatible.

On the education front, the resort's upcycling hub, The Lab, hosted 1,376 guests in sustainability workshops in 2024, where visitors participated in candlemaking, soapmaking and craft activities with local artisans. The facility also collected 18,528 pounds of waste through beach cleanups.

Tangible Results

The Datai publishes Annual Impact Reports, which provide detailed, data-rich documentation of achievements to inspire other hospitality businesses. To take just one example, in its aim of achieving zero waste to landfill, The Datai achieved 96-percent solid waste processing.

MEET OUR 2025 JUDGES

Their opinions, combined with reader votes, determined the global award winners.

JENNY SOUTHAN
Founder and CEO, Globetrender

RHYS JONES
Aviation Editor, *Head for Points*

MICHAEL KEATING
CEO, Ink Global

JESSICA NABONGO
Author, Explorer and Cultural Ambassador

TAMSIN COCKS
Editor, *Business Traveller*

MARC C. O'FLAHERTY
Design & Travel Writer and Photographer

JONNY CLARK
Managing Director, Ink Studio

KATHARINA HESEDENZ
Writer and Former Editor, *Vogue* Germany

ERIC NEWILL
Editor in Chief, *Business Traveler U.S.*

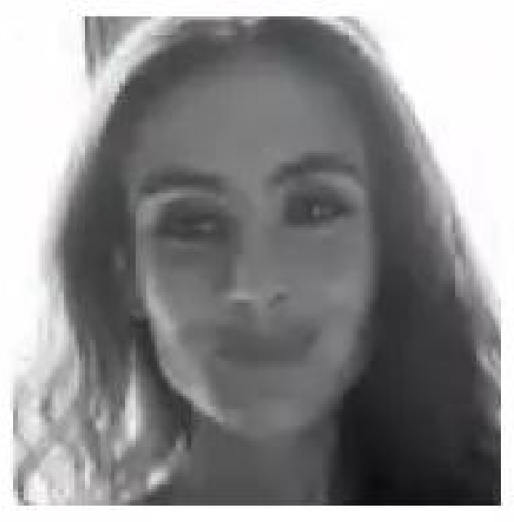
KEE FOONG
Travel, Food and Lifestyle Writer

TOM OTLEY
Sustainability Consultant and Director

HANNAH BRANDLER
Deputy Editor, *Business Traveller*

GILBERT OTT
Director of Partnerships, *Point.me*

DAN GARDNER
Co-Founder, Code and Theory



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ENRIQUE PERRELLA
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IMAGES DATAI HOTELS

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DELTA AIR LINES

The Atlanta-based carrier again dominates North America

STORY BY **BENJAMIN CHIANG AND ENRIQUE PERRELLA**

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Airbus A350-900; crew; Delta Shake Shack burger

BEST NORTH AMERICAN AIRLINE

BEST NORTH AMERICAN DOMESTIC FIRST CLASS

BEST NORTH AMERICAN AIRLINE BUSINESS CLASS

BEST NORTH AMERICAN AIRLINE INFLIGHT FOOD & BEVERAGE

Delta walked away with six trophies, cementing its reputation as the airline to beat in North America.

Yet behind the celebration lies a more pressing question: Does Delta truly deserve these accolades? Few groups are better positioned to answer that than the airline's most loyal passengers—its Diamond Medallions and Million Milers.

These seasoned travelers, collectively responsible for spending millions of dollars annually on Delta flights, have decades of firsthand experience across cabins, routes and lounges. Their candid commentary offers a grounded view of where Delta excels and where it falls short.

THE COVETED TITLE

To be crowned Best North American Airline is no small feat, and loyalists argue Delta consistently earns it. "When Delta delivers a good experience, they do it better than others. Their service on their best days is the best in the industry," says Lindsay Renfro, a Million Miler Diamond Medallion.

Other travelers point to Delta's strong luggage handling and employee morale. "I have no worries about my checked luggage not arriving with me," notes Mandy Hutchison, another Diamond Medallion. "I also like how Delta puts an emphasis on employee satisfaction, because happy employees treat customers well."

Still, cracks are showing. IT reliability, customer service delays and the

BEST NORTH AMERICAN AIRLINE CABIN CREW

BEST NORTH AMERICAN AIRLINE INFLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

> “When Delta delivers, they do it better than others.”

IMAGES COURTESY OF DELTA AIRLINES

controversial SkyMiles overhaul rank high among gripes. “Messaging with customer service is frustrating,” says Ivan Wong, a Million Miler. “Representatives have limited ability to help, and I end up calling the Diamond desk, which is a mixed bag.”

Jill Schiefelbein, another Million Miler, is even blunter: “With recent changes to how status is earned, I feel less valued and have less incentive to choose Delta.” United’s premium investments, some say, could soon challenge Delta’s crown.

Delta’s Domestic First Class win raised eyebrows. Much of the praise stems from its ubiquitous seatback screens and refreshed interiors. Yet the competition isn’t far behind. “What’s missing is product consistency,” argues Denise Lee, another Diamond Million Miler. “Pick a style and stick with it.” But with a fleet of nearly 1,000 planes, this might prove challenging.

Meal service is another sore point. “For any flight over one hour, there should be entrée choices,” says Mark Stanley, a 2 Million Miler. “And Delta stops serving meals after 9 p.m.”

DELTA ONE OR DELTA CONFUSION?

Delta’s flagship product, Delta One, promises lie-flat comfort. But not all Delta One is created equal. The airline operates a patchwork of seat types—some suites with sliding doors, others outdated narrow-beds dubbed “coffin class,” available on 35-year-old Boeing 767s. For frequent travelers, that inconsistency matters. “Delta One looks like a small first class or a large business class seat,” says David Park, who flies regularly to Asia. But champagne upgrades—from Moët to Taittinger—have won admirers like Sithandazile Ntuka, who calls it “a touch of elegance and indulgence.”

Another star are the Delta One Lounges in JFK, Los Angeles, Boston and Seattle. *Business Traveler* judge Jessica Nabongo praises them as “a truly premium experience,” citing private entrances and refined dining.

HITS AND MISSES

Food awards are always contentious, but Delta earned kudos for bold partnerships. From Shake Shack burgers to Fox Bros. Bar-B-Q, the variety resonates. “On my recent flight, nearly every passenger in First class opted for the Shake Shack burger,” notes Dandy Weyn.

Desserts have been upgraded, too, moving from plastic-wrapped cookies to plated sweets. Alcohol, however, is the biggest weak spot. “The wines and spirits are subpar,” says Bonnie Williamson, another Million Miler and wine importer. “There’s no need to be bottom of the barrel.” United, some argue, leads in wine and cocktails.

THE HUMAN DIFFERENCE

If one award feels fully justified, it’s Cabin Crew. Delta’s flight attendants routinely earn praise for their warmth, humor and creativity. Profit sharing and direct ties to management—rather than union contracts—may play a role. “Building their winning culture has taken decades,” says Brent Klovstad, a frequent flyer.

Personal touches stand out. One traveler recalls finding a handmade gingerbread man with a thank-you card on Christmas morning. “When they’re on, they’re incredible,” says Jeff Willy.

A SCREEN FOR EVERY SEAT

Delta continues to lead with seatback screens and its Delta Studio library of more than 1,000 hours of content. The newer Delta Sync adds personalization, with tie-ins to Paramount+ and Walmart+.

“What I like most is the variety—it feels like my own streaming service in the sky,” says Million Miler R.D. Alba. New additions like YouTube and Crunchyroll appeal to younger travelers, but Wi-Fi reliability remains uneven. “It’s a mess never knowing what equipment your aircraft has,” says Valerie Caprigno. Still, in an era when screens are evolving, Delta’s investment here feels like a passenger win.

THE VERDICT

Delta’s six awards showcase both its strengths and contradictions. The airline shines in crew engagement, entertainment and lounge experiences, but struggles with product consistency, beverage quality and loyalty program trust. Longtime customers such as Schiefelbein want their voices heard: “Loyalty should be a two-way street.”

Awards recognize excellence, but they also provoke scrutiny. For Delta, the 2025 sweep is both a celebration—and a challenge. The airline may lead the pack today, but as rivals sharpen their products, how long can it hold onto the crown?

→

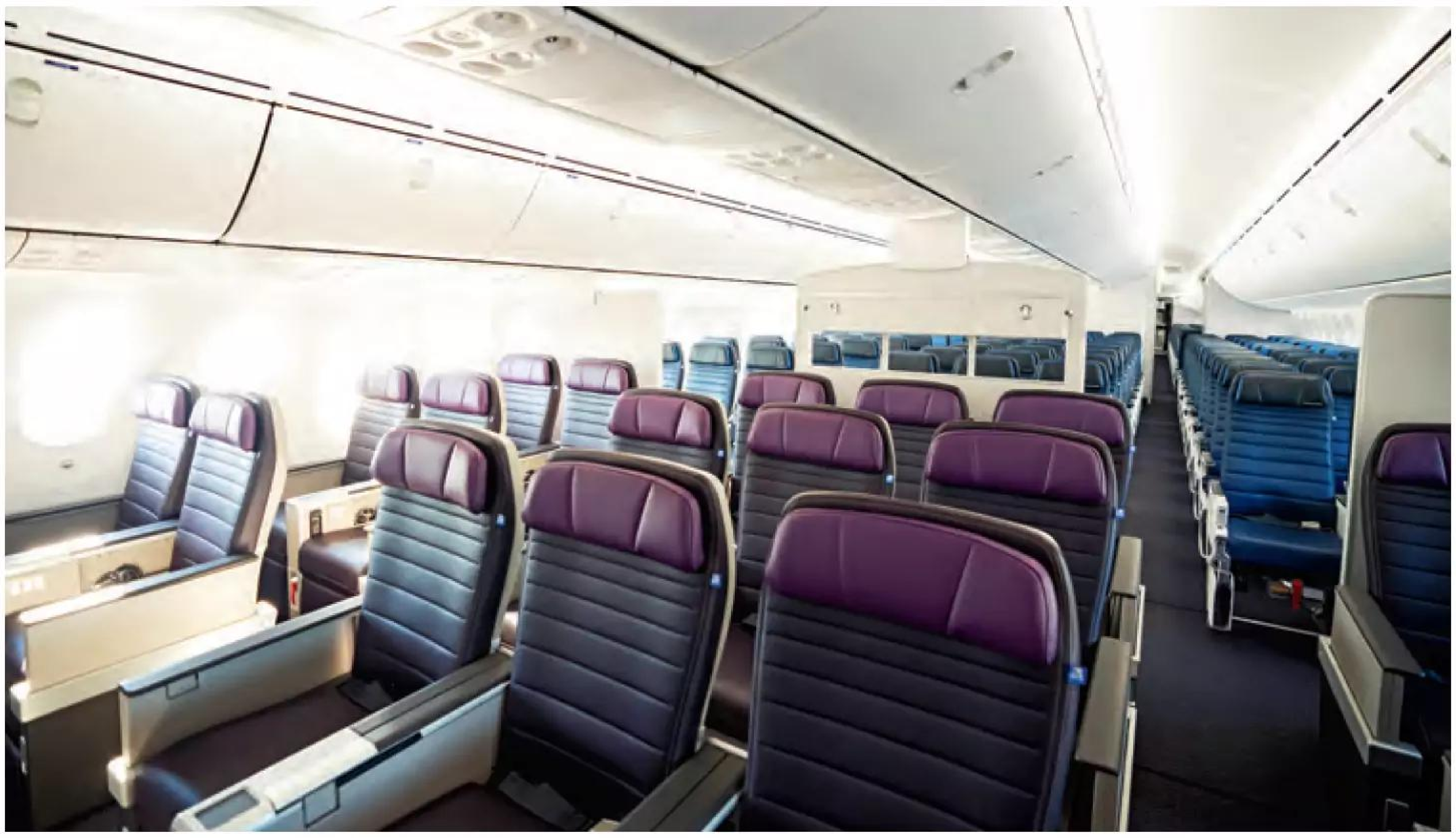
BEST NORTH AMERICAN AIRLINE PREMIUM ECONOMY CLASS

UNITED AIRLINES

STORY BY **JAKE JONES**

UNITED'S PREMIUM PLUS offers a compelling experience upgraded from standard Economy. Available across its Boeing 767, 777-300ER and 787 aircraft, the cabin offers significantly more personal space and comfort than the main cabin. Seats are wider, provide extra recline and include additional legroom, making it easier to settle in for long-haul international flights. If you can score this product on a transcontinental flight, you're in for a real treat. All Premium Plus passengers are given a curated amenity kit by Therabody that includes all of the essentials. Additionally, passengers receive a pillow and blanket provided by Saks Fifth Avenue, although some may find the blanket quite thin.

Dining is noticeably elevated in Premium Plus, as well. Meals are served on china with metal cutlery and include complimentary alcoholic beverages. Passengers also benefit from an improved ground experience, with priority boarding and additional checked-bag allowance. Comparing United's premium economy product to its competition, the hard product is fairly similar across the board, with United and Delta maintaining an edge over American in this regard. However, we still believe Delta outperforms both by a wide margin when it comes to its soft product. Dedicated crew members as well as premium touches such as hot towels and tablecloths make its overall product feel more like "business lite" than premium economy. We would have cast our vote for Delta in this category.



United Premium Plus on a Boeing 787 Dreamliner

> On a transcontinental flight, you're in for a real treat.

HOW TO BOOK

The most surefire way to book United Premium Plus would be directly through United's MileagePlus program, which offers the most availability for premium seats on United's long-haul international fleet. United does price its rewards dynamically, meaning prices will vary greatly depending on the route and date range of the booking. Typically, one-way award tickets from the U.S. to Europe can range from 60,000 to 95,000 miles, while one-way prices from the U.S. West Coast to the Asia-Pacific region can range from 65,000 to 105,000 miles. United Premier Platinum and Premier 1K members can also use PlusPoints to secure upgrades from Economy into Premium Plus.

BEST NORTH AMERICAN AIRLINE ECONOMY CLASS

AMERICAN AIRLINES

STORY BY **ENRIQUE PERRELLA**

HATS OFF TO American Airlines for clinching this year's award in a market where comfort margins are razor-thin. Its backbone fleet of Boeing 737-800s, MAX 8s and A319/320/321s delivers consistency—but not innovation. On rare hub-to-hub routes, a wide-body 777 or 787 offers a fleeting taste of luxury. Yet critics say American's "uniformity" feels more like inertia. "They don't have those fancy seatback screens," notes *The Air Show* host Brett Snyder, pointing out American's stripped-down cabins. Analyst James Larounis adds: "With no seatback entertainment, tight pitch and minimal upgrades, it's a wonder anyone calls it the best." Delta and United clearly outpace it with roomier layouts, modern seats and, importantly, larger bins. Perhaps the award reflects loyalty more than comfort—because in economy class, perception still flies higher than reality.

IMAGES COURTESY OF UNITED AIRLINES, COURTESY OF AMERICAN AIRLINES

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

From scrappy origins to premium amenities

STORY BY **EDWARD RUSSELL**

Southwest
Southwest.com
8705

BEST NORTH AMERICAN LOW-COST CARRIER

The mainstay of affordable air travel in the U.S. over the past five decades, Southwest Airlines is the Best Low-Cost Carrier in North America. From scrappy origins flying the "Texas triangle" between Dallas, Houston and San Antonio, the carrier's low-fare wings now stretch coast-to-coast, to Hawaii and south into the Caribbean and Latin America. For most Americans, the "Southwest effect" of lowering airfares everywhere it flies is alive and well. But even the best face challenges. Southwest is in the midst of upheaval owing to investor pressure to boost profits. Red-eyes and checked bag fees rolled out earlier this year, with assigned seating (and assigned seat fees) and a premium extra-legroom section coming in January. The changes beg the question: Has Southwest lost the special sauce that made it a fun and affordable airline to fly? That is an open question, but one thing is clear: In an industry where premium and loyalty are having a moment, Southwest is a laggard. Before Southwest completely transforms into just another airline, here are some notable dates that defined the carrier.

FROM ABOVE
A Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 MAX 8; the airline celebrates its expansion into the Hawaiian Islands

Southwest's low-fare wings now stretch coast-to-coast, to Hawaii and south into the Caribbean and Latin America.

IMAGES ASHLEE D. SMITH/SOUTHWEST AIRLINES; GETTY IMAGES

Notable Dates in Southwest's History

1966
Rollin King pitches Herb Kelleher an idea for an airline flying the "Texas Triangle" on a now famous cocktail napkin.

1971
Southwest Airlines takes to the Texas skies as the scrappy underdog challenging the status quo in the regulated airline industry.

1979
Following the deregulation of U.S. airlines, Southwest makes its first foray outside the Lone Star State to New Orleans.

1993
Southwest acquires David Neeleman's Morris Air, significantly expanding its Western presence.

2009
Southwest lands at New York's LaGuardia Airport, a symbolic end to its long-standing policy of avoiding congested big-city airports.

2011
Southwest acquires AirTran with its Atlanta hub and international flights.

2014
A banner year that saw Southwest's first branded international flights and the end of Wright Amendment restrictions at its home airport, Dallas Love Field.

2019
Aloha! Southwest takes off to Hawaii.

2020-21
Southwest adds 20 new destinations in a pandemic growth spurt that overestimated market shifts. It would drop four cities within three years.

2022
Weather disruptions turn into a full-blown meltdown with Southwest cancelling nearly 17,000 flights between Christmas and New Year's.

2024
Activist investor Elliott Management buys a stake in Southwest, calling for changes to boost profits.

→

citi
AAdvantage
American Airlines
LINDA WALKER
Platinum Select
mastercard

BEST FREQUENT FLYER PROGRAM IN NORTH AMERICA

AMERICAN AIRLINES AADVANTAGE

STORY BY **JAKE JONES**

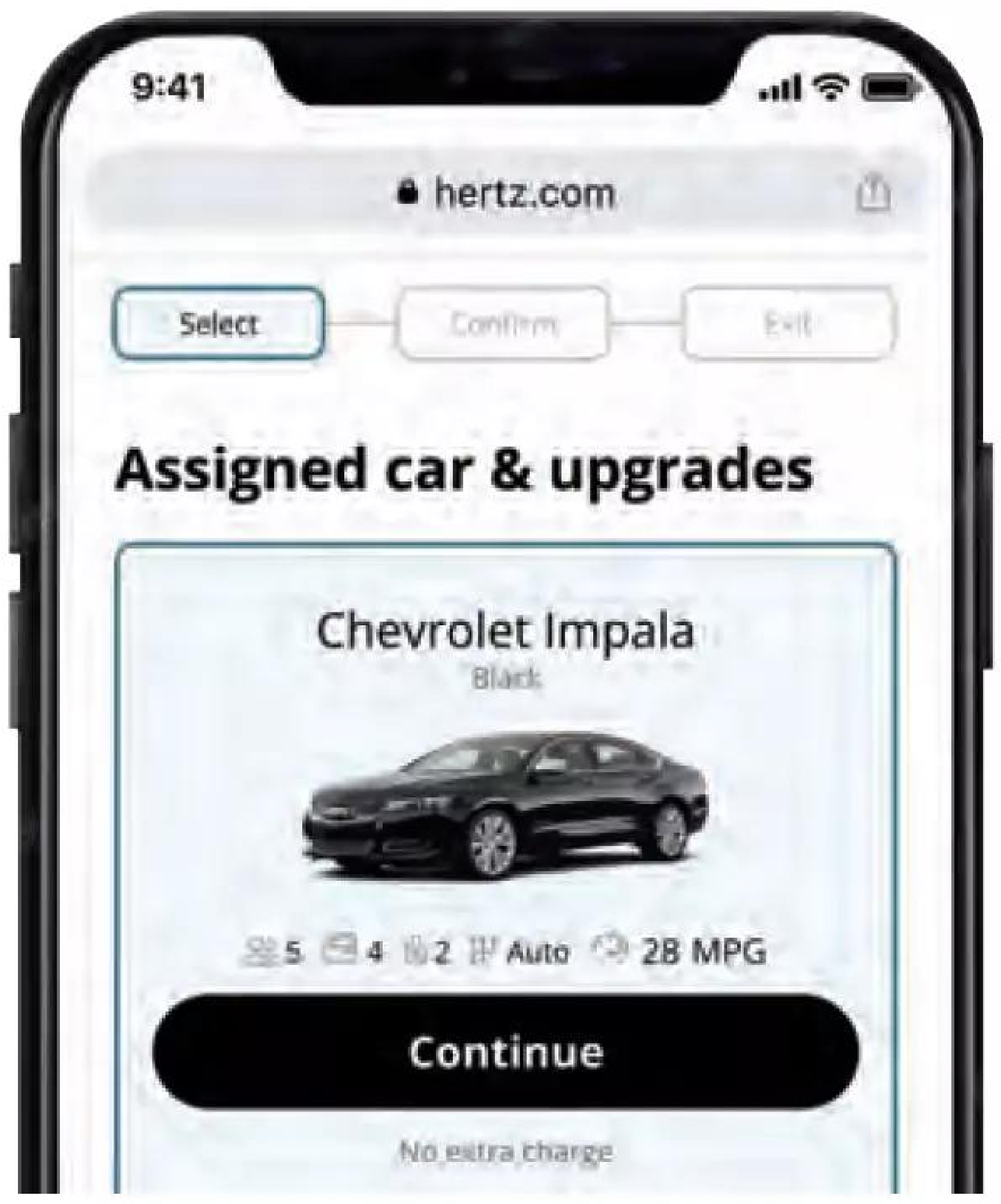
AMERICAN'S AADVANTAGE program has long been a favorite for frequent flyers seeking maximum value from their loyalty. Status with American is straightforward to earn and comes with arguably the most generous alliance benefits thanks to its Oneworld membership. AAdvantage miles are also easy to accrue through its lineup of co-branded credit cards and the recent transfer partnership with Citi ThankYou Rewards. When it comes to redemptions, AAdvantage prices awards dynamically but often delivers some of the best deals. Domestic flights can start at just 7,500 miles one-way, while international opportunities shine through Oneworld partners. Coveted premium seats like Qatar Airways' Qsuites or Japan Airlines' Business Class are frequently available at some of the most competitive long-haul award rates in the market. Overall, AAdvantage remains one of the most rewarding programs for travelers who value flexibility, affordability and premium partner redemptions.

BEST CAR RENTAL COMPANY IN NORTH AMERICA

HERTZ

STORY BY **JEREMY TAYLOR**

HERTZ IS THE second-largest rental firm in North America, with more than 2,700 locations across the country in approximately 1,180 cities. A vast fleet of cars is a key reason Hertz stood out from the rest. The choice of models is extensive, from famous muscle cars and SUVs to the latest electric vehicles from Polestar. The speciality American Collection is a must for auto enthusiasts. Vehicles such as the Ford Mustang and Chevrolet Camaro are perennial favorites, while a Ram 1500 puts drivers head and shoulders above the rest. Another reason drivers love Hertz? The make and model is guaranteed.



Assigned car & upgrades

Chevrolet Impala
Black

5 4 2 Auto 28 MPG

No extra charge

HYATT PLACE

BEST MIDSCALE HOTEL BRAND IN NORTH AMERICA

HYATT PLACE

STORY BY **LARK GOULD**

AS TRAVEL IS oft defined by the blended "bleisure" trip, Hyatt Place has cemented its position as the leader in the midscale category. Its victory as Best Midscale Hotel Brand in North America reflects a commitment to its tagline, "Your work/live place." The brand provides a dynamic basecamp for the multitasking traveler who demands a seamless transition between professional obligations and personal downtime. This is achieved through intentionally designed guest rooms that feature distinct zones for sleep, work and relaxation, including a signature Cozy Corner with sleeper sofa. With its trademark 24/7 convenience—from around-the-clock food and beverage offerings to free Wi-Fi—plus such in-demand amenities as complimentary customizable breakfasts, fitness centers and energized lobby lounges, the brand prioritizes productivity and ease of recharging.

> Another reason drivers love Hertz? The make and model is guaranteed.

IMAGES **ADOBE STOCK**

BEST AIRLINE LOUNGE IN NORTH AMERICA

AMERICAN AIRLINES PREMIUM LOUNGES, JFK

A suite of spaces evokes neighborhoods of NY and London

STORY BY **ENRIQUE PERRELLA**

What You'll Find Inside

THE GREENWICH LOUNGE sits at the apex of the experience. Guests are welcomed by a self-serve champagne station featuring Piper-Heidsieck Cuvée Brut on free flow. Tableside service upgrades the occasion with Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame, alongside bespoke cocktails such as a Manhattan crafted with Woodford Reserve or an aviation with Aviation American Gin. Spirits such as Glenfiddich 18 Year Old and Patrón El Alto tequila round out the top shelf. Multicourse dining ranges from seared scallops to artisanal cheeses and New York cheesecake, while private workspaces, Molton Brown-stocked showers and semiprivate pods elevate the business traveler appeal.

The Soho Lounge offers a more social canvas. À la carte plates spotlight New York favorites—think bagel boards with lox or freshly spun pasta—paired with Sonoma pinot noirs. Champagne flows with Moët & Chandon Impérial and Piper-Heidsieck as the staples, joined by Veuve Clicquot at the staffed bar. Art installations, oversized screens and communal tables lend the room a gallery-meets-cocktail-party feel.

The Chelsea Lounge, meanwhile, is a cocoon of calm. Champagne service centers on Laurent-Perrier, rotated with seasonal sparkling wines, while lighter fare—gourmet sandwiches, kale Caesar and New York-inspired desserts—keeps the tone refreshingly understated. Margaritas, cosmopolitans and a selection of regional wines and craft beers complement plush seating and wellness corners, making it a lounge built for quiet indulgence.

American Airlines has been awarded Best Airline Lounge in North America for its premium precinct at New York-JFK, where Terminal 8 now houses a trio of elevated spaces: The Greenwich, Soho and Chelsea lounges. Created in partnership with British Airways in 2022, these lounges replaced the Flagship lounge after a $200 million renovation. Each reflects a different New York or London neighborhood, offering a distinct blend of design, cuisine and amenities tailored to the tier of travel.

FROM TOP Chelsea Lounge; Soho Lounge

IMAGES **COURTESY OF AMERICAN AIRLINES**

> "American offers the greatest breadth of choice and refinement."

The Debate Over "Best"

NOT EVERY FLYER agrees with the accolade. "American truly does have the best lounge game at JFK," argues analyst and AAdvantage Million Miler James Larounis. "With Greenwich, Chelsea and Soho, these lounges are now some of the best in the entire American Airlines system."

But *Business Traveler* Awards judge Jessica Nabongo disagrees: "I don't think American should have won for best airline lounges at JFK. During my visit while flying Business International, I found the lounge to be in need of some upkeep, and the food options could use improvement. I believe the Delta One Lounge would have been a more deserving choice."

Gilbert Ott, another judge, offers nuance: "JFK is a highly competitive lounge environment but American offers the greatest breadth of choice and refinement. The Soho and Greenwich lounges are each unique, with strong catering programs and proximity to departure gates. This investment creates a solid moat at JFK."

The result is a lounge network that divides opinion but undeniably raises the stakes at JFK. For some, American's trio delivers a best-in-class ground experience. For others, the verdict remains unsettled: Is this trio of lounges really better than the Delta One Lounge at JFK?

→

BEST THIRD-PARTY LOUNGE IN NORTH AMERICA

AMEX CENTURION LOUNGE, JFK

STORY BY **GEORGE GOMEZ**

WHEN AMERICAN EXPRESS set out to expand its Centurion Lounge network, it chose New York-JFK for its most ambitious project yet: a sprawling, two-story, 15,000-square-foot flagship. In 2025, that decision paid off as the lounge was crowned Best Third-Party Lounge in the USA at the *Business Traveler* Awards. For frequent flyers—and our judges—the recognition comes as no surprise.

Scale and Sophistication

Unlike many credit card lounges that feel cramped and utilitarian, the JFK Centurion Lounge was designed with scale and refinement in mind. As the first two-story lounge in the network, it offers a remarkable breadth of amenities—dedicated coworking areas, family-friendly spaces and quiet nooks for calls or reflection. The attention to layout ensures that even at peak hours, the lounge rarely feels congested.

A Dining Program With Pedigree

Amex tapped acclaimed New York chef Ignacio Mattos—four-time James Beard Award nominee—to elevate the culinary offering. The result is a menu that goes far beyond the standard lounge buffet.

Dishes such as fennel salad with Castelvetrano olives and fried maitake mushroom po'boys set a higher bar for airport dining. Local coffee from Irving Farm and wines curated by Anthony Giglio anchor the program firmly in New York, offering travelers a taste of the city without leaving Terminal 4.

The 1850 Speakeasy

If one feature tipped the scales in the lounge's favor, it's likely 1850, the Prohibition-style cocktail bar hidden behind a discreet metal door. By day, it doubles as a café; by night, it transforms into a moody, wood-paneled speakeasy. Drinks come courtesy of Jim Meehan, the award-winning mixologist behind Manhattan's PDT, with menus that rotate around themes of travel and place. The bar is as convincing a cocktail destination as anything in Midtown—it just happens to be inside an airport.

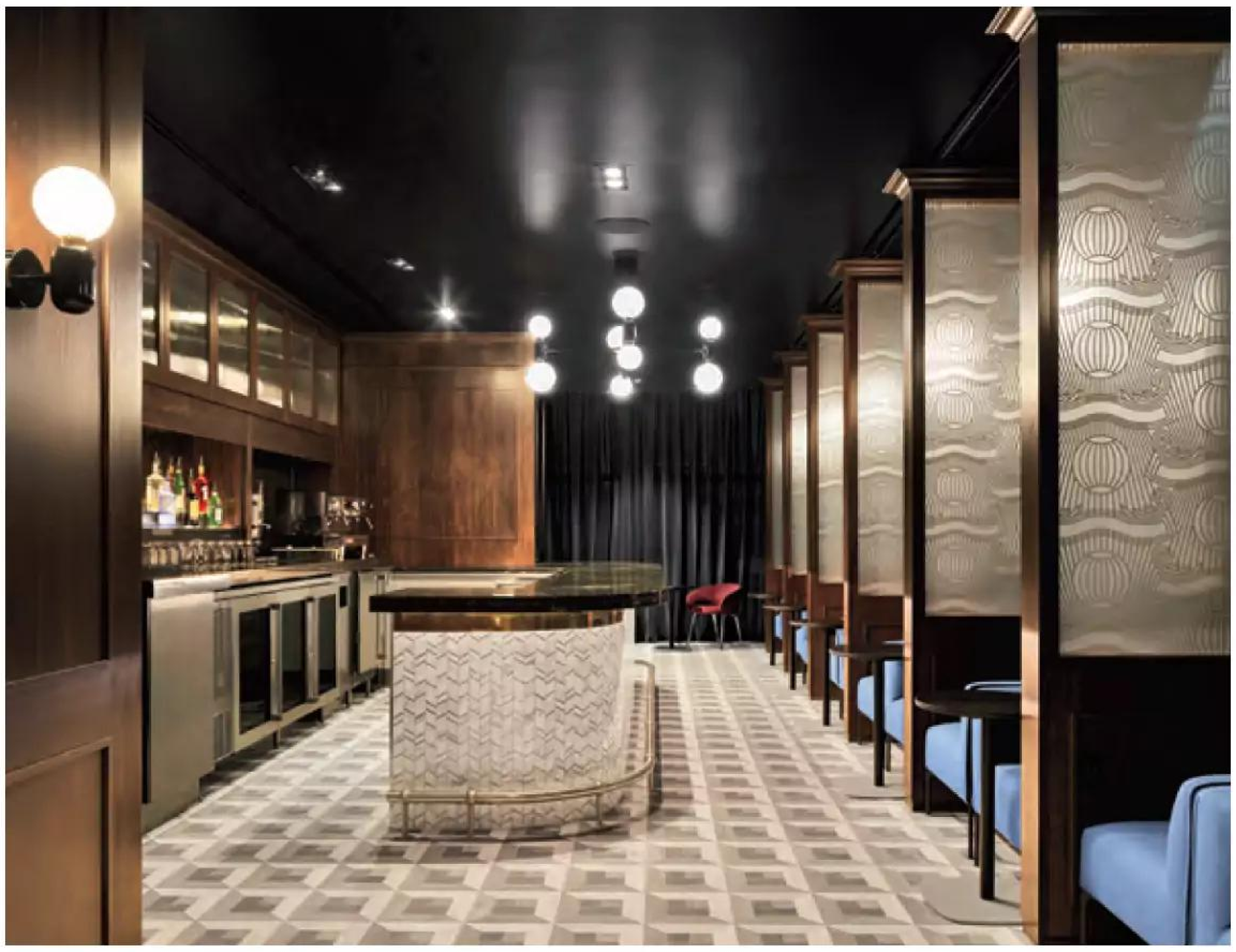
Brand Standards

Centurion Lounges are more exclusive than their competitors, accessible only to a specific group of American Express cardholders. While many Centurion Lounges across the country often experience congestion and long waitlists, the JFK location has managed to enhance the guest experience through premium services and a consistent brand standard. At JFK, this approach has been refined to perfection.

Winning Best Third-Party Lounge in the USA is less about grandeur and more about execution. At JFK, American Express has managed both.

> The 1850 Speakeasy is as convincing a cocktail destination as anything in Midtown.

THE CENTURION
AMERICAN EXPRESS



FROM TOP The entrance at JFK; the 1850 Speakeasy

BEST AIRPORT
IN NORTH
AMERICA

JOHN F. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

STORY BY **GEORGE GOMEZ**

NEW YORK'S JOHN F. Kennedy International Airport is rarely out of the spotlight. As the nation's most dynamic international gateway and one of the world's great aviation crossroads, it has long carried both the glamour and grit of global air travel. In 2025, it added another accolade to its ledger: Best Airport in the USA at the *Business Traveler* Awards.

Scale and Connectivity

With over four million passengers moving through its terminals each month and more than 70 airlines on its roster, JFK remains unmatched in scale. It serves as a true global connector—ranked 14th worldwide for international connectivity and, notably, the only North American airport to make the global top 25 list of low-cost-carrier hubs. This balance of full-service and budget airlines positions JFK uniquely for both corporate travelers and leisure flyers, an inclusivity few other U.S. airports can match.

Investment in the Future

What earned the award is not only today's performance but also the promise of tomorrow. The Port Authority is leading a $19 billion transformation that is already changing the travel experience. The new Terminal 1 and all-new Terminal 6 are under construction, outdated concourses are being replaced, and expanded facilities will be operational by 2026. For frequent flyers who have dealt with years of temporary fixes, this redevelopment signifies a significant shift in how JFK is preparing to serve the next generation of travelers.

New York-JFK Airport

IMAGES **COURTESY OF JFK PORT AUTHORITY**

Premium lounges, a retro hotel and world-class amenities give JFK a competitive passenger experience edge.

Passenger Experience

J.D. Power ranked JFK sixth among North American mega-airports in passenger satisfaction—remarkable given the construction-related disruptions still underway. Its terminals vary in age and design, yet premium spaces stand out. American Airlines and British Airways' Chelsea, Soho and Greenwich lounges in Terminal 8 were named Best Airline Lounge in North America this year, underscoring the airport's strength in premium hospitality. The retro-themed TWA Hotel, with its rooftop pool and cocktail bar inside a restored Lockheed Constellation, also earned top honors as Best Airport Hotel in North America. Add to that the Delta One Lounge, constantly touted among the best in the world, and JFK's competitive edge in premium services becomes clear.

More Than Just Numbers

JFK's influence extends beyond passenger travel. It ranks in the top ten among U.S. airports for international air freight, underscoring its role as a vital economic engine for New York and the nation. For business travelers, this dual function—as both a people mover and cargo powerhouse—cements its importance on the global stage.

THE FINAL VOTE

JFK is not perfect—few mega-hubs are—but its scale, resilience and ambition distinguish it. Winning Best Airport in the USA is less about where it stands now and more about the trajectory it has set: a hub that is finally evolving into the world-class facility New York deserves.

→

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

The group dominates the domestic scene, with brands including Courtyard by Marriott, Residence Inn by Marriott, and Marriott Bonvoy

STORY BY **LARK GOULD**

In an era of economic uncertainty, Marriott International is executing a strategy of quiet dominance. The hospitality giant isn't just weathering the storm—it's building an ark for every type of traveler. Recent accolades tell the story: Marriott was simultaneously named Best Upscale Hotel Brand, while its Courtyard and Residence Inn won for Best Budget and Best Extended Stay, respectively. *Business Traveler* readers also crowned it Best Hotel Brand for Conferences, while Marriott Bonvoy won Best Hotel Loyalty Program.

This sweep is no accident. It is the result of a deliberate plan to capture what CEO Anthony Capuano calls "100 percent of your travel wallet." With a colossal portfolio of more than 9,600 properties across 143 countries, Marriott is methodically eliminating reasons for a guest to stay elsewhere. The launch of its new conversion brand, Series by Marriott, is bringing five new U.S. properties into the fold in Miami Beach, Chicago, San Francisco, Santa Monica and San Diego.

This expansion comes even as Marriott slightly lowers its full-year outlook. Still, the company's resilience is striking. Demand persists, fueled by a post-pandemic prioritization of travel. Marriott's answer is a relentless focus on segmentation, from the recent tech-integrated acquisition of CitizenM to luxury safaris and outdoor cabins. "I've said repeatedly that our overarching strategy is to have a broad and diverse portfolio of brands, but among our responsibilities is to make sure that each of those 30-plus brands enjoys a very distinct, well-articulated positioning for the consumer," Capuano noted in a report.

Marriott's vast, multitiered ecosystem is underpinned by the formidable engine that is Marriott Bonvoy, a loyalty network of more than 237 million members. The program is the glue that allows a budget-conscious traveler at a Courtyard to aspire to a luxury stay at a Ritz-Carlton, all within the same points universe.

"With our strategy to be everywhere, we expanded our global brand portfolio," said Capuano. "We continue to enhance our Marriott Bonvoy travel platform and are deepening engagement through unique experiences and strategic collaborations."

> "Our overarching strategy is to have a broad portfolio."

BEST UPSCALE HOTEL BRAND IN NORTH AMERICA

BEST BUDGET HOTEL BRAND IN NORTH AMERICA

BEST EXTENDED STAY BRAND IN NORTH AMERICA

BEST HOTEL LOYALTY PROGRAM IN NORTH AMERICA

BEST HOTEL BRAND FOR CONFERENCES IN NORTH AMERICA

IMAGES **GETTY IMAGES**

> Each one of SLH's hotels is subject to an annual ritual that is dizzyingly precise.

BEST INDEPENDENT HOTEL BRAND IN NORTH AMERICA

SMALL LUXURY HOTELS OF THE WORLD

STORY BY **TODD PLUMMER**

THE NEXT TIME you sink into the crisp sheets of a Small Luxury Hotels of the World property, pause for a moment. In a discreet digital report, one of SLH's anonymous inspectors has already been there before you. They assessed whether the bed was comfortable enough, whether the wake-up call came on time, and whether the scrambled eggs at breakfast were sufficiently fluffy.

Each one of SLH's 650-odd member hotels is subject to an annual ritual that is dizzyingly precise and, in a world driven by lackadaisical online views, surprisingly romantic: a mystery inspection, carried out once every 12 months by its cabal of secretive inspectors. Most inspections are carried out via a handy mobile app—so the traveler tapping away on their phone across from you at the hotel bar could very well be working undercover.

"If a hotel fails, we come back six months later," explains Richard Hyde, COO of SLH. Fail a second time and, well, you'll be hearing from Mr. Hyde.

Unlike other luxury consortia, SLH's inspectors are not salaried staff. They are, interestingly, an eclectic mix of curious travelers: Some are airline pilots, there's a retired United States Army general, some judges, even the occasional travel journalist. There are between 130 and 150 spread across the world, and they all share a passion for fine hotels, for discretion, and for noticing details that 99 percent of others might miss. Their compensation: two nights in the world's loveliest hotels, and the satisfaction of upholding the exacting standards of the SLH brand. "They really do it out of love for travel," says Hyde. Inspections begin with the entry—arrival experience, efficiency of the check-in, being greeted by name, and so forth—and proceed unflinchingly through every other aspect of the hotel, from housekeeping to furnishings, and to spa, restaurant and bar, if applicable.

What distinguishes SLH's process is its independence. Other luxury groups employ auditors who sometimes debrief a property's management or ownership at the end of a stay. SLH takes a much more arm's-length approach. "We never do an exit interview," Hyde notes. "Once you reveal yourself as an inspector, you're no longer anonymous. And in smaller destinations like Mykonos or Santorini, where several of our member hotels might be all owned by one family, it's very easy for word to get around that our inspector is on their way."

It is this highly independent, rigorous review process that allows SLH's member hotels to feel like standard-bearers in their markets. Instead of being bound by stifling global brand standards, each property gets to shine in its own way—all the while being (discreetly) policed by SLH's passionate, incognito inspectors.

FROM TOP Two Small Luxury Hotels of the World properties: Castle Hot Springs, Morristown, Arizona; Sowaka, Kyoto, Japan

IMAGES **COURTESY OF SMALL LUXURY HOTELS OF THE WORLD**

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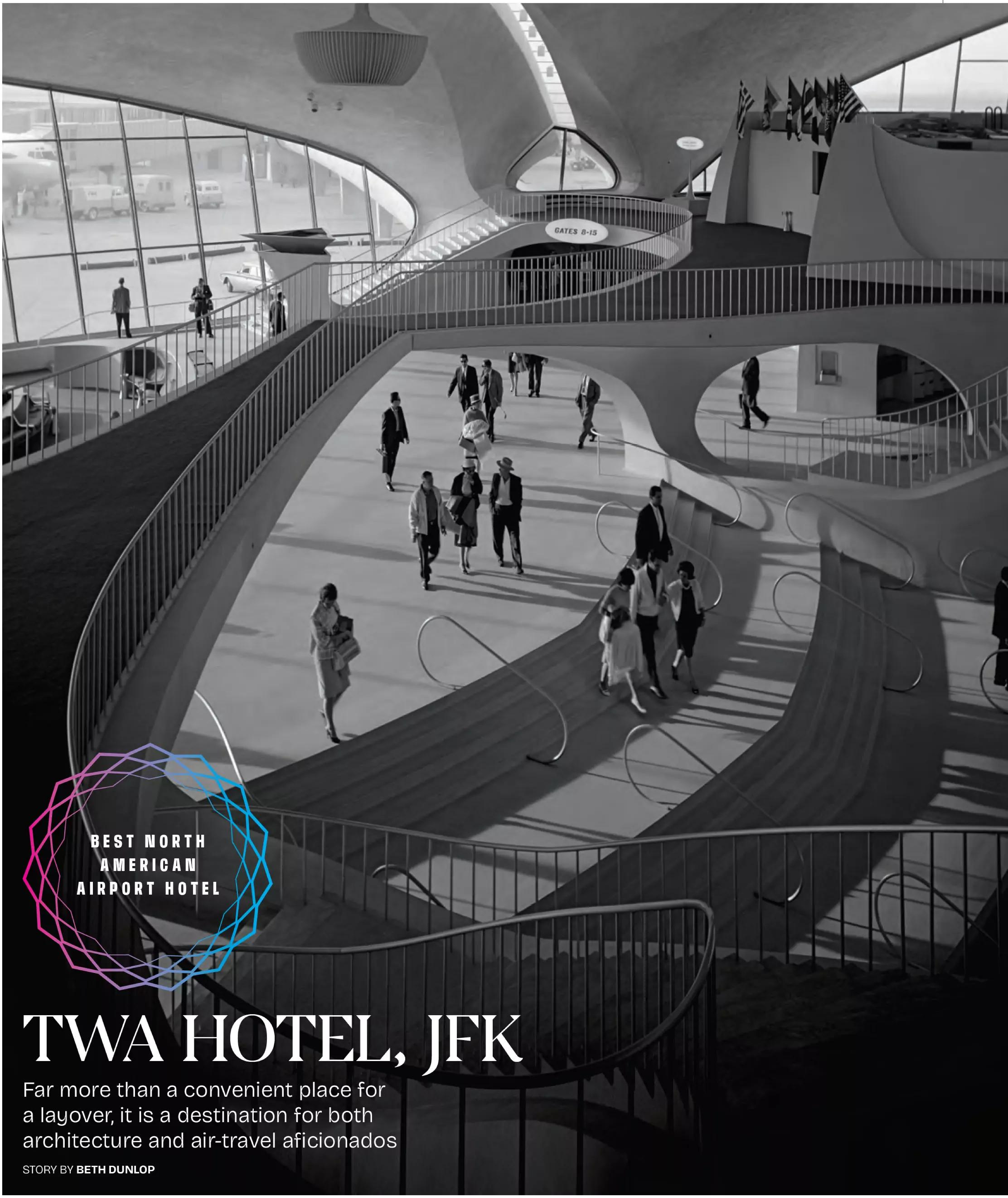
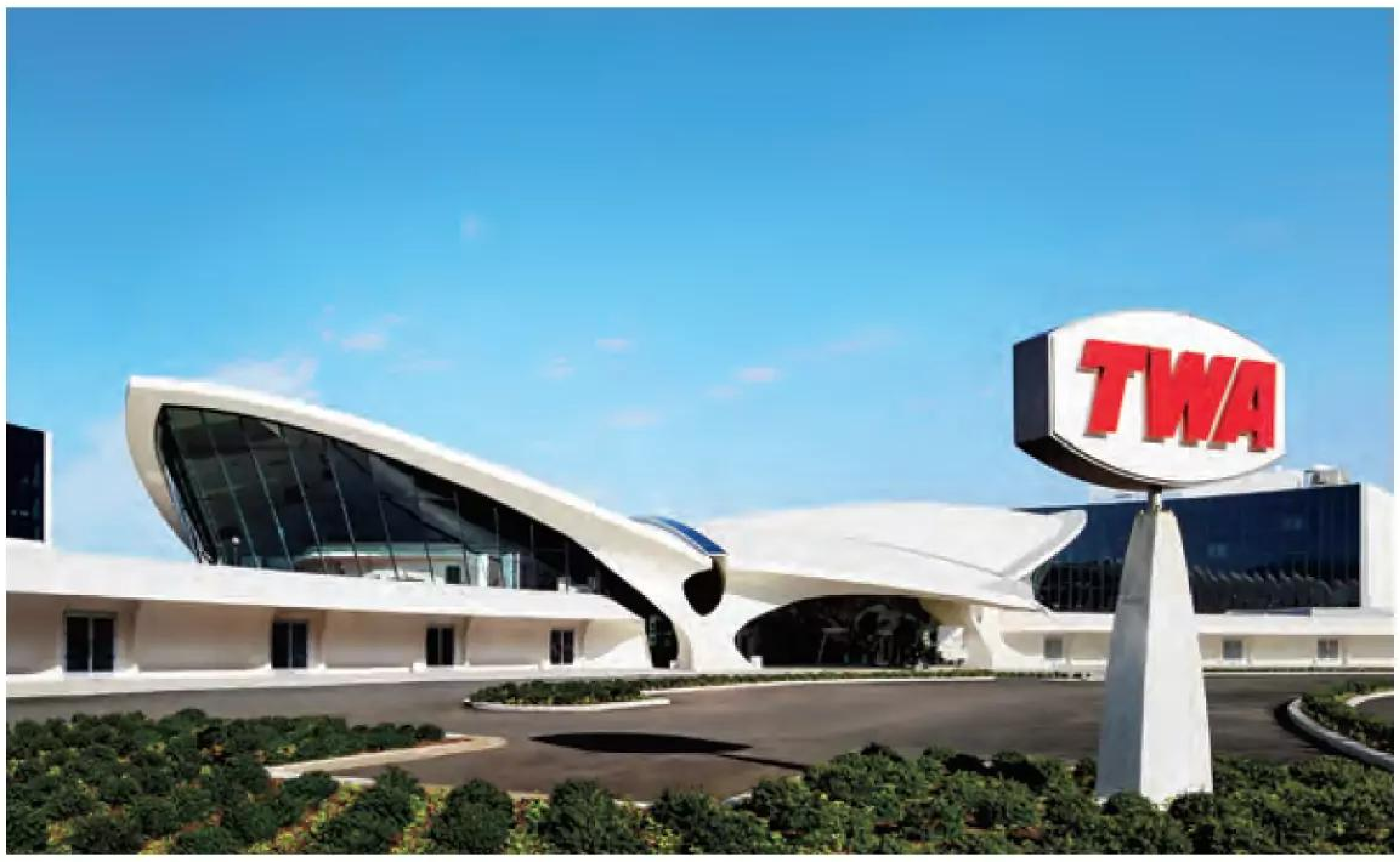


BEST NORTH AMERICAN AIRPORT HOTEL

TWA HOTEL, JFK

Far more than a convenient place for a layover, it is a destination for both architecture and air-travel aficionados

STORY BY **BETH DUNLOP**



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE TWA Flight Center photographed by Ezra Stoller, 1962; TWA Hotel today; rooftop pool; guest room

The TWA Hotel pays homage to a time when the future was more fascinating than formidable, when the sky (and beyond) was the limit. It is a testimonial to both the power of architecture and the vision of its architect, Eero Saarinen. Then and now it is a beacon for New York's largest airport, a memorable landmark that celebrates an era.

Today, travelers can conjure that moment in the lovingly designed and carefully curated TWA Hotel. Far more than a convenient place for a layover, it is a destination for both architecture and air-travel aficionados, and a lure for travelers and locals wanting a unique getaway. It is unique in the true sense of the word—there is nothing like it. And though it offers such contemporary amenities as a rooftop pool (overlooking a runway) and full gym, it also provides a museum-worthy exploration of the golden age of aviation. Here, guests can quaff a martini in a restored Lockheed Constellation aircraft-turned-bar; savor an Airplane Mode (light and dark rums and orange curaçao) in a mid-century Sunken Lounge; and dine on vintage TWA-inspired dishes from chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten in the historic Paris Café. It is an architectural icon, to be sure, but in this fast-paced and frenetic world, it offers a moment of time travel, back to the future.

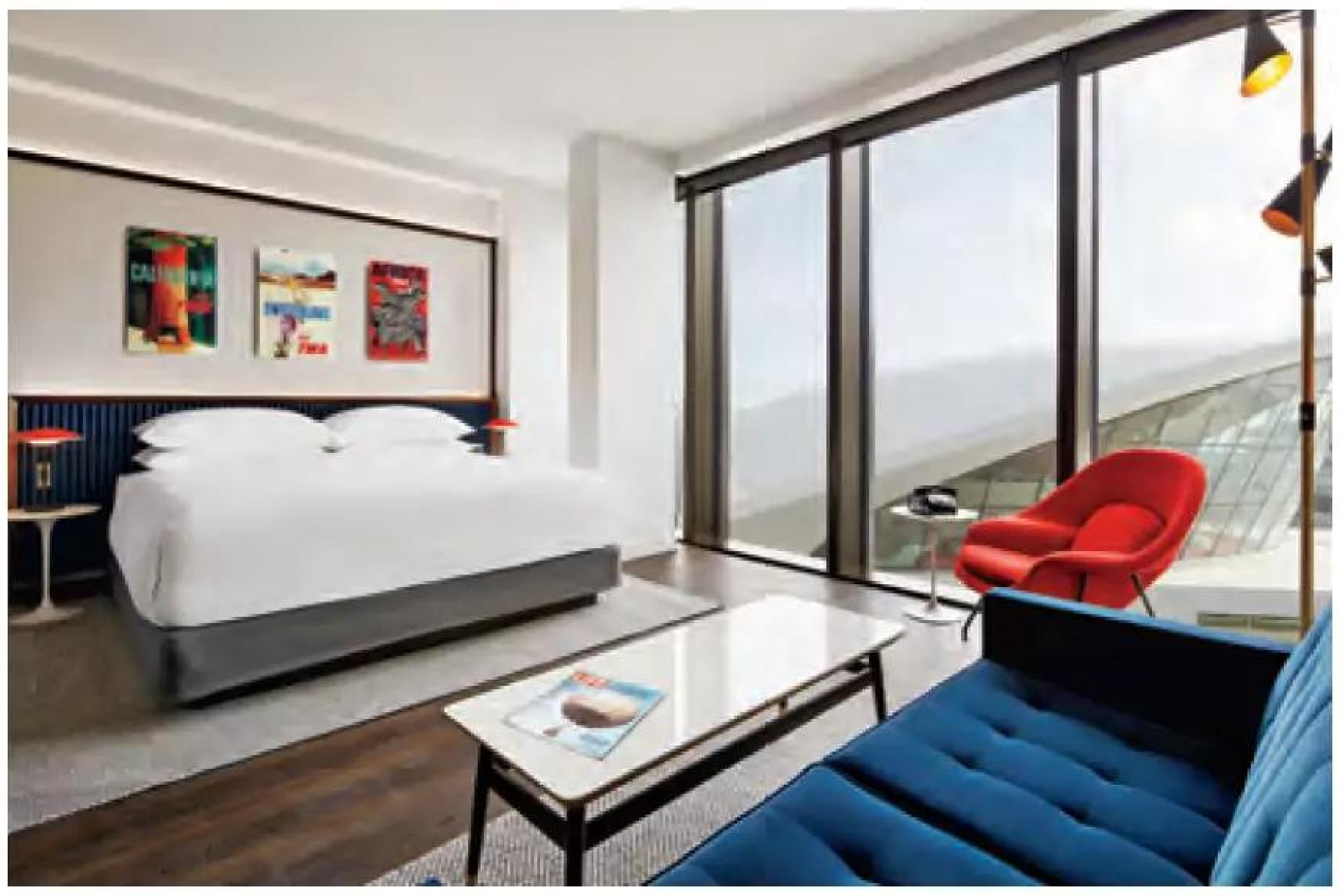
It was November 1957, a time of widespread American optimism (think Ike and Elvis, not to mention the introduction of Bubble Wrap and the Frisbee), when the president of Trans World Airlines announced plans for a new terminal at New York's Idlewild—later renamed JFK—which would be "in keeping with the coming jet age." The Finnish-born but American-bred and -educated Saarinen would be the designer. When the structure was completed, *New York Times* architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable called it "Eero Saarinen's magnificently detailed and executed tour de force."

The TWA terminal was (and is) dynamic and expressive, a monumental sculpture symbolically evoking a giant soaring bird, its wings lifting skyward. Architect and scholar Alexander Gorlin termed it "a primal allusion to the idea of an airplane as a Darwinian progression from the pterodactyl to the technology of the plane in flight." And Saarinen designed it all, from the glass tubes leading to the planes right down to such minute details as the ashtrays.

It is unique in the true sense of the word—there is nothing like it.

But the future came faster than anyone could have anticipated, and much too soon the once futuristic features of the terminal become obsolete. TWA went out of business in 2001 and the building stood empty, though it remained prominent in the annals of architecture and the American imagination, in part due to an appearance in the 2002 film *Catch Me If You Can*.

Though officially owned by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the TWA terminal has been in the caring hands of the New York architectural firm Beyer Blinder Belle since 1996, and in particular Richard Southwick, a partner and the firm's director of historic preservation. Under his guidance, the terminal was designated both a state and national historic landmark. At one point, the company thwarted a Port Authority proposal to demolish the building (it occupies a prime corner of the airport complex), ultimately seeking the highest and best reuse for it. There were a few false starts until Tyler Morse and his firm, MCR, came into the picture, vowing to restore and reimagine what he termed "Saarinen's masterpiece."



With Beyer Blinder Belle at work on the historic architecture, the firm of Lubrano Ciavarra designed two simple hotel towers (you reach them through the glass tubes that once led passengers to their planes), Stonehill Taylor provided the interior design, and Inc Architecture & Design created a subterranean events space. Today the TWA Hotel commemorates a moment in time—from Womb Chairs and Petal Tables to its futuristic architectural language—but it does so in a way that is forward-looking and contemporary.

"No detail was overlooked," said Morse, "from the millwork by Amish artisans to the custom font inspired by Saarinen's own sketches to the one-of-a-kind manhole covers. Now the world can enjoy this mid-century marvel for many years to come."

IMAGES **EZRA STOLLER/ESTO/REDUX/EYEVINE; TWA HOTEL**

THE ART OF *Perspective*

Gatherings at Kiawah Island Golf Resort offer a new view of success. It's where mindful moments transcend tasks on a calendar and achievement is measured by the depth of experiences. It's an environment where discussions inspire innovations. Where collaboration is shaped by island adventures, and taking time to reflect is the ultimate path to progress. Here, a meeting is not only business, it's a breath of fresh air.

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Tried & Tested

Expert takes on this month's essential places and products

HOTEL

Necessary Luxuries

A SoHo classic remains a chic hideaway

READ THE REVIEW

→

IMAGE PATRICK MICHAEL CHIN

Last Night in SoHo

For a returning guest, The Mercer remains a timeless New York classic

STORY BY
EDEN HERBSTMAN

The Mercer New York City

The hotel excels at providing the ideal necessities.

FOR BUSINESS TRAVELERS, The Mercer might not be an obvious choice. It's a hotel that attracts artists, celebrities and globe-trotting stylists. Its busy season? September, February and the first week of May, all around fashion's calendar. It's the type of place Anna Wintour might hang her black sunglasses. Still, it's less pretentious than one would assume, welcoming a cosmopolitan mix. One just has to get behind the curtain—literally.

Located at the corner of Mercer and Prince, the hotel is famously known for discretion. There's no obvious entrance or signage. Guests enter through flowing white curtains, past a doorman or two. Black SUVs typically wait at the curb. The lobby is guests-only—although the hotel has been known to bend that rule for a select who's who. For all its privacy, though, The Mercer prides itself on being part of the neighborhood's fabric. At the epicenter of luxury shopping and local favorites—Prada, Rimowa, Mercer Street Books—it has been an haute pioneer since 1997.

The property is centrally located Downtown, with both the Financial District and Midtown a short distance away by taxi, as well as two nearby subway stations. The 24-hour concierge staff is among the best. Calm, collected and cool in black, they look like stylists from the neighboring Kirna Zabête store. Flying in on a red-eye or landing past midnight? Nothing sweats this round-the-clock team.

Arriving on a first flight out of Miami, I found my room wasn't ready. Yet I was happy to enjoy espresso and newspapers in the lobby—the buzzing center around which the hotel operates. There's no superfluous programming to keep guests on-site—they likely need to see or be seen elsewhere. The hotel excels at providing the ideal necessities, emphasized by clean design.

Comfortable banquettes are scattered. Waiters check in offering food or beverages, and a curated library of newspapers, magazines and art books is displayed near the front desk. There is no full gym, but guests can access the nearby (overcrowded) Equinox on Crosby Street.

The intentionally minimal 73 rooms and suites feel like luxury lofts. With high ceilings and exposed brick, they are furnished with a large dining table. A bathroom enveloped in marble includes a beautiful bathtub and rainfall shower.

Come nightfall the hotel is quiet, and you won't hear much at all from the street. Not that it's devoid of nocturnal revelry. The subterranean lounge (Sub)Mercer is a neighborhood late-night spot, one of Manhattan's rare last-call destinations.

The Mercer became a beacon of cool courtesy of hotelier and former owner André Balazs, also responsible for Chateau Marmont and Chiltern Firehouse. BD Hospitality tapped Bond Hospitality's Scott Sartiano as a partner in April. Guests can access Sartiano's club, Zero Bond, and club members can use The Mercer's lobby.

Some might recall the hotel's Mercer Kitchen by chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten, which closed in 2022. It was replaced by Sartiano's, but Christian Liaigre's original design remains—maybe that's what makes dining there somewhat bittersweet.

The Italian restaurant's strengths are main courses, including cavatelli verde and roasted half chicken. Cocktails lean on the sweeter side, mimicking Amalfi Coast refreshers; stick to serious wines and stiff drinks. It can't be easy to follow The Mercer Kitchen's act, but the selection of Alfred Portale (from Gotham Bar and Grill) as culinary director shows prowess. And the dining room does provide a lively atmosphere.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Guest room; bar amenities; lobby

BEST FOR

A boutique stay in SoHo. The concierge ensures any request, large or small, can be met. If you appreciate simple necessities, it doesn't get more posh. And if you enjoy people watching, you won't be disappointed.

VERDICT

The Mercer is a Manhattan institution, and it provides a quintessential SoHo stay. The rooms and suites offer luxury apartment-style living. You'll feel like a New Yorker, even if your stay is just for a New York minute. With Scott Sartiano now as a partner, I'm curious to see how the hotel evolves for the next generation of travelers and returning guests.
mercerhotel.com

IMAGES **PATRICK MICHAEL CHIN**

DOHA TO DALLAS-FORT WORTH

Best in Class

Qatar Airways proves its excellence on a transatlantic flight

IN JUST OVER three decades, Qatar Airways has evolved from a small regional carrier into one of the world's most prominent airlines. With a fleet of more than 230 aircraft flying to nearly 180 destinations, the Doha-based carrier has built a reputation for service, luxury and ambition. Its award-winning Qsuite Business Class, introduced in 2017, set a new industry standard by offering privacy doors, customizable seating and fine dining designed to rival top restaurants.

That pursuit of excellence has not gone unnoticed. In 2025, Qatar Airways clinched five top honors at the *Business Traveler* Awards, including Best Airline and Best Business Class in the World. Flying the airline's flagship Airbus A350-1000 from Doha to Dallas-Fort Worth offers a clear demonstration of why the airline consistently dominates such rankings.

Check-In

My journey began in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with a transfer through Hamad International Airport in Doha. Business Class passengers arriving from short-haul connections are ferried in private vans with burgundy leather seats to the dedicated First and Business Class transit security. The process is smooth, swift and strikingly personal compared to the usual large group transfers common at hub airports.

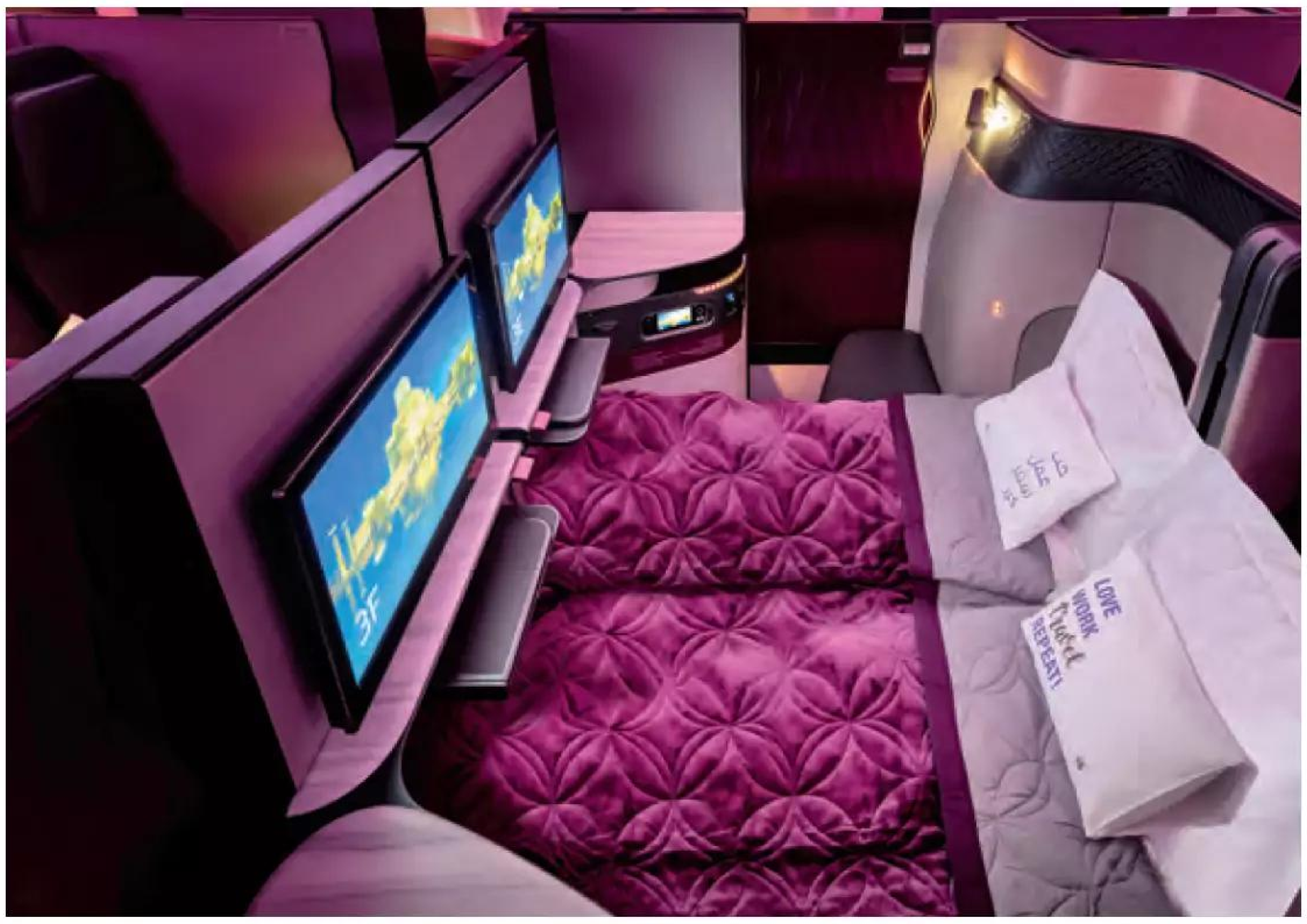
Hamad International itself is a modern showpiece, recently expanded with 17 new gates across concourses D and E.

For Qatar Airways, the airport serves as both a gateway and a showcase, consistently ranking among the world's best.

Lounge

Qatar's Al Mourjan Business Lounge The Garden is situated on the mezzanine level of the North Node, offering a view of the airport's tropical indoor garden. Spanning 80,000 square feet and able to seat more than 700 guests, it is smaller than the flagship South lounge, yet impressively equipped. Entry is included for most Business and First Class fares, while passengers traveling on discounted Lite fares must purchase access.

This facility contributed to Qatar Airways being named the Best Airline Lounge in the World at this year's *Business Traveler* Awards.



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE The Qsuite can be found on select Boeing 777s and Airbus A350s; "Honeymoon Suite"; Airbus A350-1000

IMAGES COURTESY OF QATAR AIRWAYS

The Qsuite remains a benchmark, balancing privacy with flexibility.

The design and amenities underscore why: shower suites stocked with Diptyque toiletries, a games room with pool and foosball, private family rooms, a smoking area, and even luggage lockers. Families will appreciate the children's play area, while business travelers benefit from quiet zones and multiple dining spaces.

During peak times—typically around midnight and in early morning—the lounge can become crowded. On my visit at midnight, there was a short wait for the sit-down restaurant. Once seated, I ordered sushi, Angus beef tenderloin and miso-glazed salmon, each dish plated and served with the care of fine dining. The buffet offered Middle Eastern staples, fresh soups and a selection of bakery items. Service was attentive, efficient and hospitable.

Boarding

Boarding in Doha follows an unusual system: Passengers clear security directly at the gate before entering an enclosed waiting area. While there are separate priority lines, all funnel into the same checkpoint. On this flight, Business Class passengers boarded via a dedicated jet bridge, minimizing congestion. I was welcomed by the purser and escorted to my seat, 5A—a rear-facing window Qsuite.

Cabin

The A350-1000 houses 46 Qsuites, designed by Collins Aerospace. Each seat measures 21.5 inches across and extends into a full flatbed of six feet and seven inches. The design alternates between forward- and rear-facing layouts, ensuring every passenger has direct aisle access. Privacy doors create a cocoonlike space, while middle seats can be combined into Quads for families or groups traveling together.

It is little wonder, then, that Qatar Airways also took home Best Business Class in the World. The Qsuite remains an industry benchmark, balancing privacy with flexibility in ways few competitors have managed to replicate. The seat comes stocked with an amenity kit by Diptyque, plush pillows, a duvet, pajamas, bottled water, and menus. Overhead bins are only located above window seats, keeping the center aisle visually open. Storage space within the suite itself is generous, with compartments for small items and devices.

The Flight

Service began with a refreshing mint lemonade and Diptyque-scented towel. Shortly after takeoff, the crew unlocked the suite doors and confirmed my meal preferences. Qatar Airways offers an on-demand dining concept, allowing passengers to order dishes at any time, with a typical 30-minute preparation window.

Wi-Fi was available for $10 for the entire flight, fast enough for browsing, though coverage lapsed briefly over Saudi airspace. Qatar is in the process of upgrading to complimentary Starlink across its fleet, which should significantly improve reliability.

Having eaten in the lounge, I opted to sleep early. The crew prepared my bed with a cozy mattress pad, duvet and pillowcase. The suite provided six hours of uninterrupted rest, aided by individual air nozzles.

When I awoke, I experienced the much discussed dining program. A multicourse service included *baeri* caviar and Balik salmon, vegetable velouté, grilled Angus beef tenderloin and a salted caramel cheesecake. Presentation was elegant, portions generous, and pacing carefully managed over 90 minutes. The quality was exceptional, rivaling restaurants on the ground.

Entertainment was provided via Oryx One, with up to 8,500 options on the 21.5-inch HD screen. The lavatories, replenished regularly with Diptyque amenities, were consistently spotless.

Prearrival service was lighter but still varied, with an acai bowl, yogurt parfait, fresh fruit and afternoon tea. Not every dish impressed—the sandwiches and fries fell flat after 14 hours in the air—but overall, the breadth and freshness of the offering was remarkable for a transatlantic flight.

BEST FOR

Travelers seeking privacy, rest, and restaurant-quality dining in the sky. The Qsuite's flexible layout suits both solo flyers and companions, backed by consistently exceptional service.

VERDICT

This Qsuite journey reaffirms why it's hailed as one of the finest experiences in commercial aviation. From the seamless ground service at Hamad International to the privacy, comfort, and polish of the Qsuite itself, every detail reflects precision and intent. Qatar's five-category sweep at this year's *Business Traveler* Awards feels entirely earned—Qsuite remains the benchmark for long-haul business travel, and Qatar Airways continues to define what Business Class should be.

qatarairways.com

STORY BY
TERRY ZARIKIAN

San Lorenzo Miami

Chef's Choice

A no-menu Italian restaurant treats diners to a small group of classics

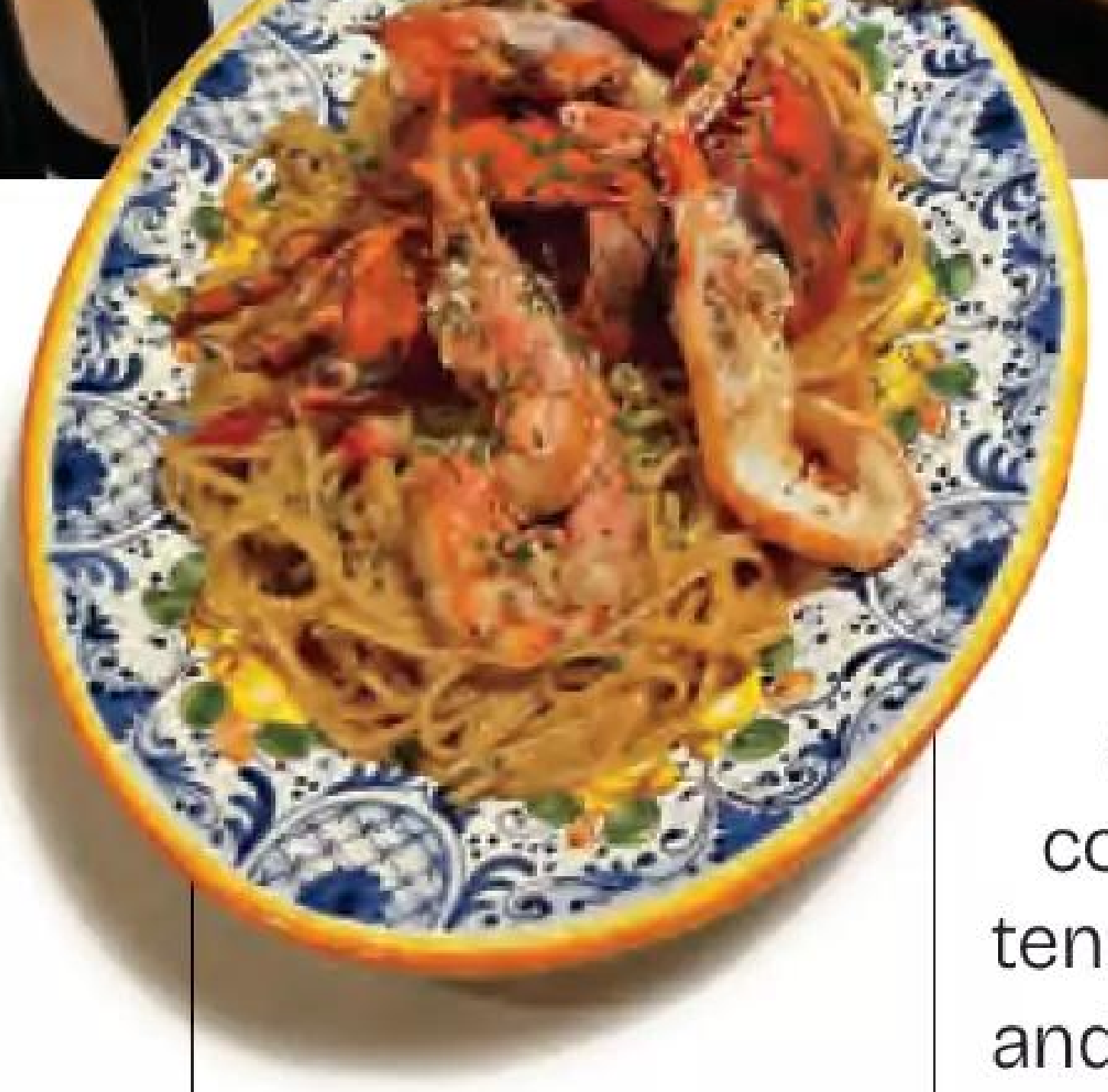
PAYING TRIBUTE TO his grandfather Lorenzo Fraquelli—the man who introduced Londoners to Italian dining when he launched the Spaghetti House concept in 1955—third-generation restaurateur Andrea Fraquelli has opened San Lorenzo, an extraordinary dining experience with a unique twist: There is no menu. The deliberately small selection ensures consistency, quality and overall excellence, as managers explain the concept and ask, "Carne or *pesce*?" After that, the evening will flow flawlessly as San Lorenzo's executive chef, Giulio Rossi, sends out his authentic Italian heritage.

"San Lorenzo is all about letting the ingredients shine," says chef Giulio. "By narrowing the focus, we ensure that every dish is a standout. We want guests to feel a sense of excitement and trust."

An unexpected location on Miami's 78th Street seats 44 people inside and 30 outdoors in a serene waterfront setting, but remember this is not Lake Como. The $120 prix fixe dinner for two presents an amazing array of antipasti, pasta, meats and sides. The $140 fish option celebrates freshness, highlighted by the Linguine San Lorenzo with its ample serving of giant prawns (depending on market availability).

Our meat menu for two included a parade of appetizers including two different types of arancini, all cheese and meat; a toasty bruschetta with fresh burrata and chopped ripe sweet tomatoes; paper-thin sliced beets with goat-cheese dots; one of the best veal *tonnatos* I have ever tasted; and a breadbasket with focaccia and fried pizza dough. This introduction was followed by the most delicious pasta in the shape of giant raviolis with Bolognese. Then came the *tagliata*, medium-rare steak served on a hot platter that continued to impart heat to the tender meat seasoned with lemon and rosemary.

Desserts at this point were hard to imagine, but we had to taste their popular tiramisu. Like other 84 Magic Hospitality concepts Cotoletta and 3190 known for their limited menus, San Lorenzo has clients flocking to it because the food is predictable and the service is among the best in South Florida.



FROM TOP Dining room; Linguine San Lorenzo; antipasti

BEST FOR

Date night or any night one wants to be pampered, wined and dined.

VERDICT

For a no-menu restaurant, San Lorenzo serves delicious versions of Italian classics, where every bite and sip is highly curated.
sanlorenzomiami.com

IMAGES SAN LORENZO, SCOTT ROTH

PAGODA
LIFESTYLE HOTEL ISCHIA

Seeking paradise on Ischia? Look no further than Pagoda Lifestyle Hotel. This 4-star oasis boasts a private beach with sunbeds and a beach bar, perfect for soaking up the sun. Relax by the seasonal pool or explore the crystal-clear waters right from the hotel's private bay. And with its private descent to the sea, this island resort provides plenty of serenity at every turn. Its close proximity to the port and Ischia's town center makes exploring the island a breeze. It's the ultimate indulgence, especially if unparalleled luxury is a priority.

Delle Fornaci 7 80077 Ischia, Italy
PAGODAHOTEL.IT

STORY BY
JEREMY TAYLOR

Genesis GV70

A Worthy Rival

Genesis' new EV is on par with its German competition

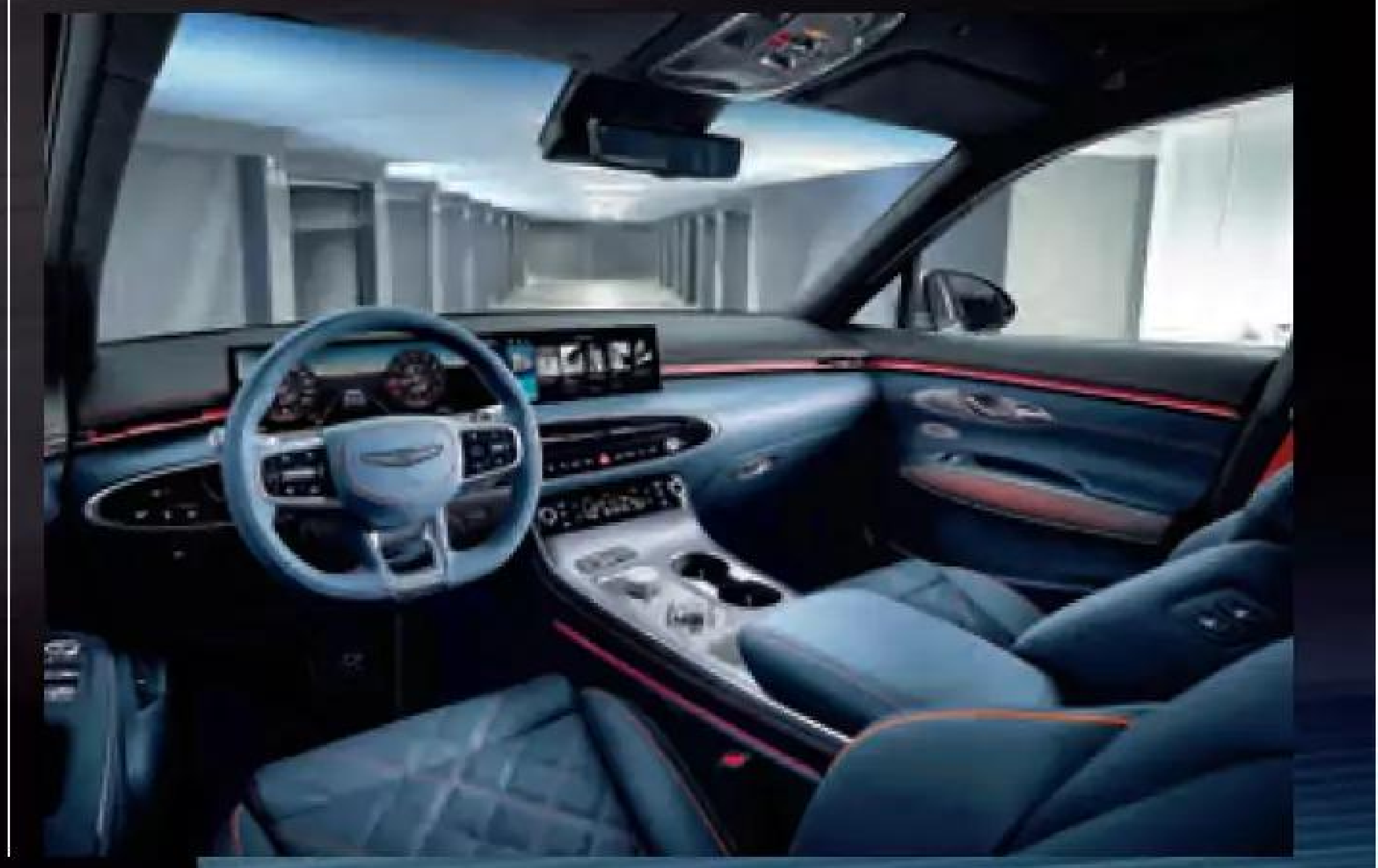
A NEW GENESIS model built in Montgomery, Alabama, the electrified GV70 is a beautifully appointed SUV and the company's first car produced outside of South Korea. Genesis is the luxury arm of award-winning Hyundai, manufacturer of class-leading family cars such as the Palisade, Santa Fe and Kona—a budget battery model starting at less than $33,000.

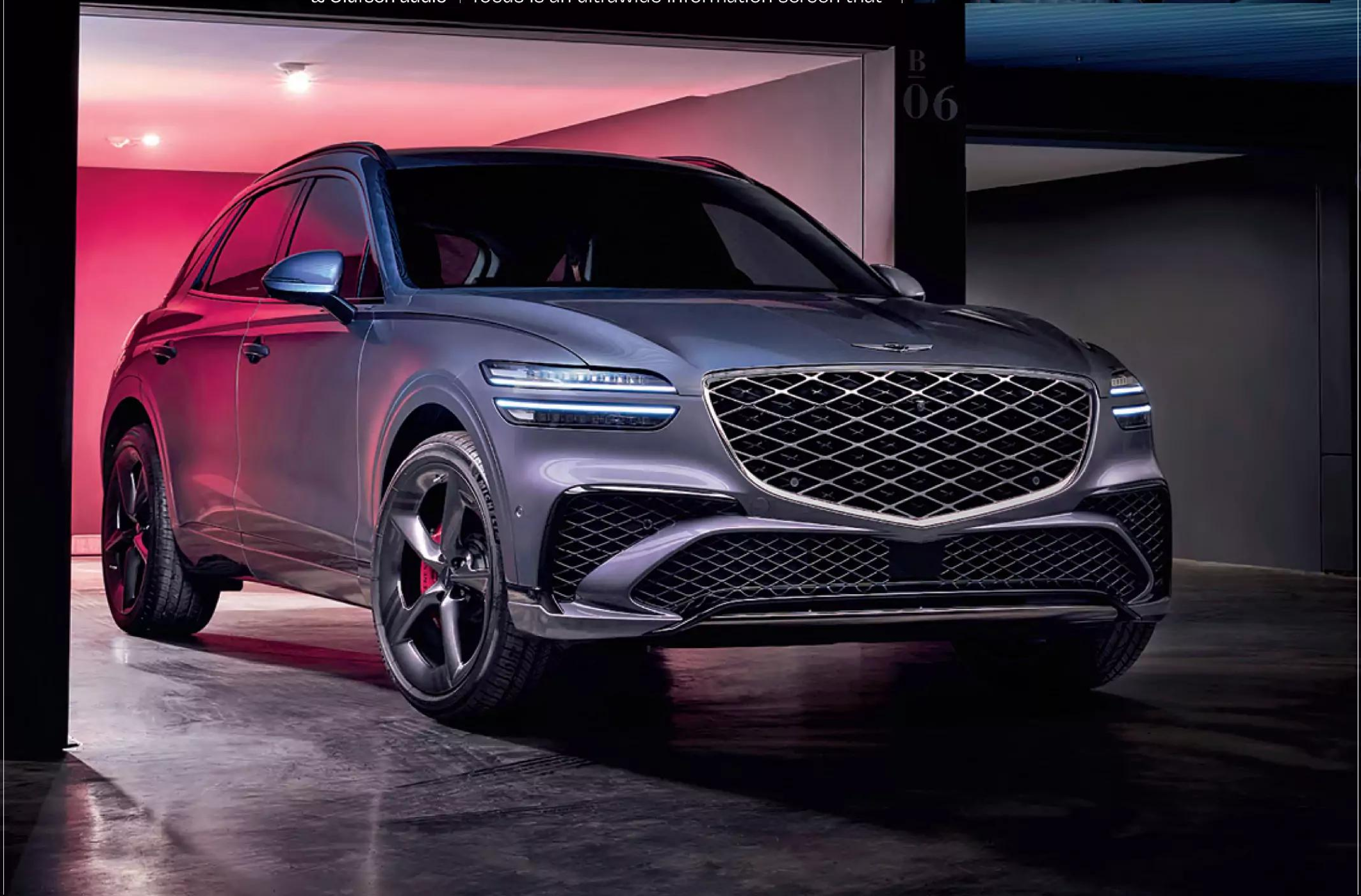
The GV70 is no run-of-the-mill SUV. Thanks to an 84 kWh battery pack, power soars to a healthy 483 hp, enough to propel the Genesis from zero to 62 mph in just 4.4 seconds. Mega-fast charging is built in, although range is a little below par at 298 miles between charges.

A worthy but slightly unorthodox rival to the BMW iX and Audi Q6 e-tron, the GV70 looks decidedly different, with a sleek and curvy shape, enormous front grille and rather fetching LED headlights. Inside, high-quality materials are on a par with German competition. The cabin is comfortable and spacious with tons of tech, while the main focus is an ultrawide information screen that stretches 27 inches across the dashboard. A highly customizable display is crisp and quick to operate.

Space is good for front-seat passengers but only average for adults in the rear. A good-sized trunk is complemented by a "frunk" under the hood—maximizing the space where a combustion engine used to be located.

The SUV sector is awash in models these days, but the electrified GV70 is worthy of consideration—especially for those with a daily commute on the highway. With prices from $64,380, it might tempt buyers who otherwise lack faith in electric cars.
genesis.com





INSIDE OUT The Genesis GV70 features sinewy curves and driver's cabin with Bang & Olufsen audio

IMAGES **COURTESY OF GENESIS**

THE SOUTH’S NEW BENCHMARK

Awarded a Michelin Key and celebrated by Condé Nast Traveler, Forbes, and Travel + Leisure as one of the best in the South, Hotel Bardo Savannah rewrites what a hotel can be. Part urban resort, part private club, it’s a full-scale immersion: a 27-meter pool and bar, holistic spa, cooking school, private members club, award-winning restaurants, and 22,000 sq. ft. of inspired gathering space.

Somewhere between the real world and the extraordinary one, Bardo is where spontaneous experiences rule. Savannah’s most exceptional address. Visit this urban resort as a guest, or become a member. Either way you’ll feel a fresh wind blowing.

Experience the South’s most talked-about hotel for yourself.

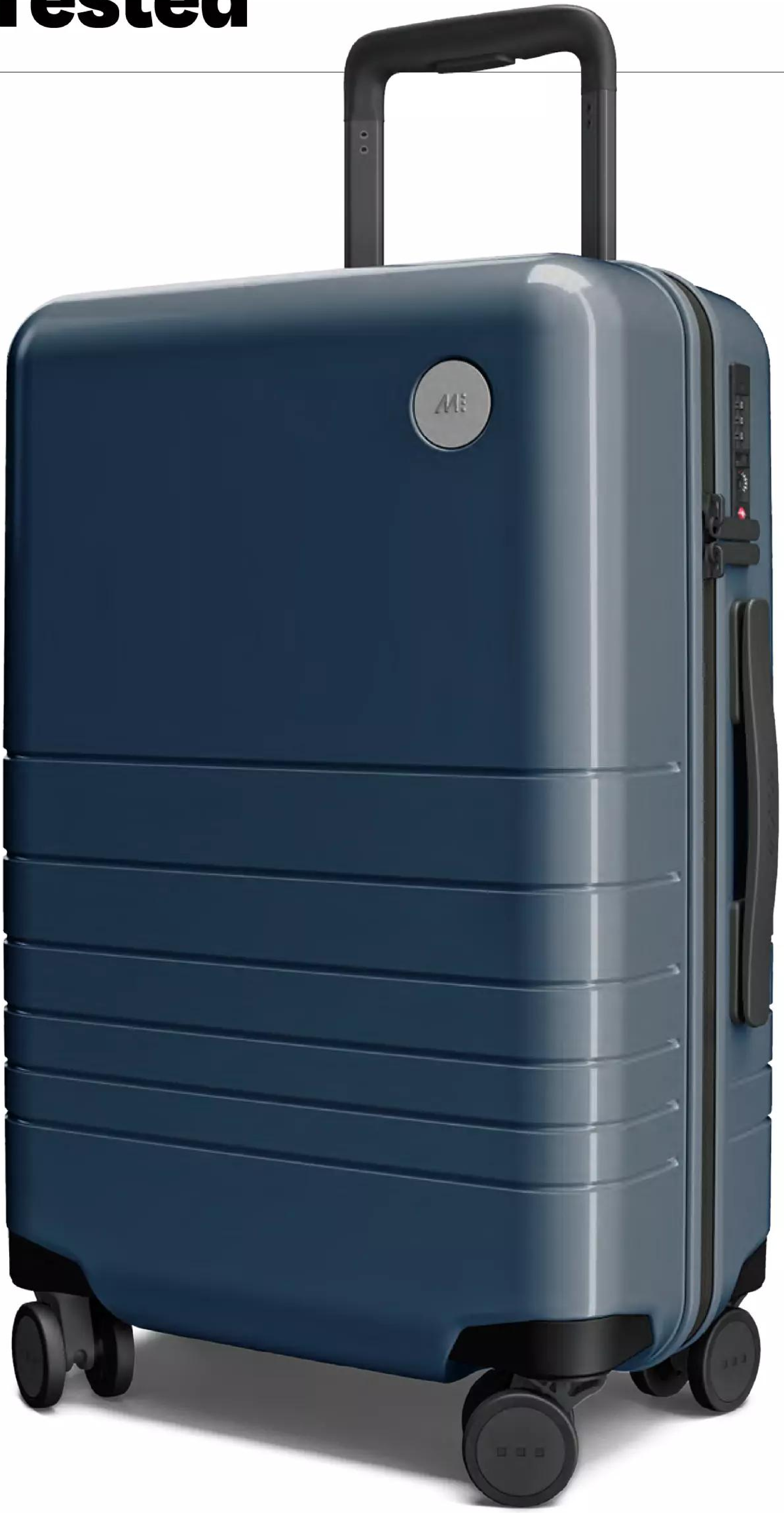
Plan your escape at staybardo.com

Gifts on the Go

New pieces ideal for the frequent traveler

ASK A FREQUENT traveler about their luggage strategy, and chances are you'll be entertained with a detailed explanation of how they game the system, from avoiding checking luggage at all costs to the types of carry-on bags that suit both their style and individual needs. That information will come in handy during gift-giving season, the ideal time to bestow a road warrior with a piece that instantly updates his or her travel gear. Depending on personal preferences, that could mean a new carry-on offering maximum room while easily stowing into overhead compartments, a backpack that offers a plethora of pockets and padded laptop space, or a bag that slides effortlessly under an airplane seat. Just in time for the 2025 holidays, we've gathered five pieces across a variety of styles and budgets, sure to appeal to every traveler in your life—even if that traveler is you. If that's the case, dog-ear this page and leave it open for all to see. They'll get the hint.

> Just in time for the 2025 holidays, we've gathered five pieces sure to appeal.



Monos x Brooklyn Coachworks Carry-On

Luggage brand Monos has partnered with Brooklyn Coachworks, the firm that specializes in restoring classic Land Rovers and Range Rovers, to codesign a one-of-a-kind Land Rover Defender in a hue dubbed Arles Blue. Named for the color of the Rhône River, the shade is also being employed in a luggage collection.

Limited-edition pieces include this Carry-On, crafted of an aerospace-grade polycarbonate shell that also contributes to its light weight—just seven pounds, unusual for a rolling bag this size. Its capacity is suitable for trips up to five days, while sustainability features include a lining made of 100-percent recycled polyester. Inside, a built-in compression pad is ideal for packing flat items, while details include 360-degree spinner wheels and a telescoping handle with four height settings. ***$305, at monos.com***

STORY BY
LAURIE BROOKINS

Best for Compact Style

Louis Vuitton Neverfull Inside Out GM

It doesn't get better than an iconic brand partnering with a legendary editor—in this case, Grace Coddington, the famed former creative director of *Vogue*, who is the latest choice to lend her aesthetic to the Louis Vuitton Travels With collection. Among the accessories are pieces that include Coddington's take on the brand's signature Neverfull tote, which every traveler will recognize as a popular piece.

Lately Louis Vuitton has been offering this bag in a reversible style. In the case of the Coddington collab, that results in an exclusive highlighting her cats. A strap also features "Louis Vuitton" in Coddington's handwriting.
$2,820, at louisvuitton.com

Victorinox Werks Traveler 7.0 Boarding Bag

In September Victorinox launched Werks 7.0, a collection designed with the rigors of travel foremost in mind. Crafted of polyester and packed with features, Werks 7.0 is available in a wide range of styles, from a toiletry bag to briefcases.

This backpack caught our eye for its attributes. Measuring 18.5 inches by 13.4 inches, this 3.7-pound, 24-liter backpack features a front zipper for easy packing and retrieval, while a front pocket is ideal for quick stowing of a passport and other items. A dedicated padded sleeve accommodates laptops up to 15.6 inches, while internal and external compression straps allow for maximum storage.
$350, at victorinox.com

Briggs & Riley Baseline Cabin Spinner

In addition to the advantages of this compact rolling bag, Briggs & Riley can add a personalized monogram, complimentary as embossed on the bag's front leather nameplate—all of which add to this style's gift-friendly vibe. The front opens fully for both convenient packing and to retrieve something with ease, while interior pockets assist with organization. A padded pocket in front will accommodate a small laptop or tablet, and an exterior pocket is perfect for tucking in essentials before TSA. This ballistic nylon bag also includes a leather-accented top carry handle and a side zip pocket that pops out to fit a water bottle.
$539, at briggs-riley.com

Béis The Essential Weekender

Two benefits immediately present themselves in The Essential Weekender by Béis, part of the brand's latest introductions for Fall. First, this unisex design, accented with gold hardware, immediately adds a splash of polish. And from a practical standpoint, this model with a detachable cross-body strap appears to take its inspiration from a doctor's bag, which means the top opens wide and enables its owner to see everything at once. In addition to easily accommodating a laptop, this oversized carryall can handle work and personal items, while another convenient touch is the trolley sleeve that allows you to secure it on top of a rolling carry-on.
$188, at beistravel.com

IMAGES **COURTESY OF MONOS; LOUIS VUITTON; VICTORINOX; BRIGGS & RILEY; BÉIS**

THE LUXURY OF EFFORTLESS SKI ACCESS

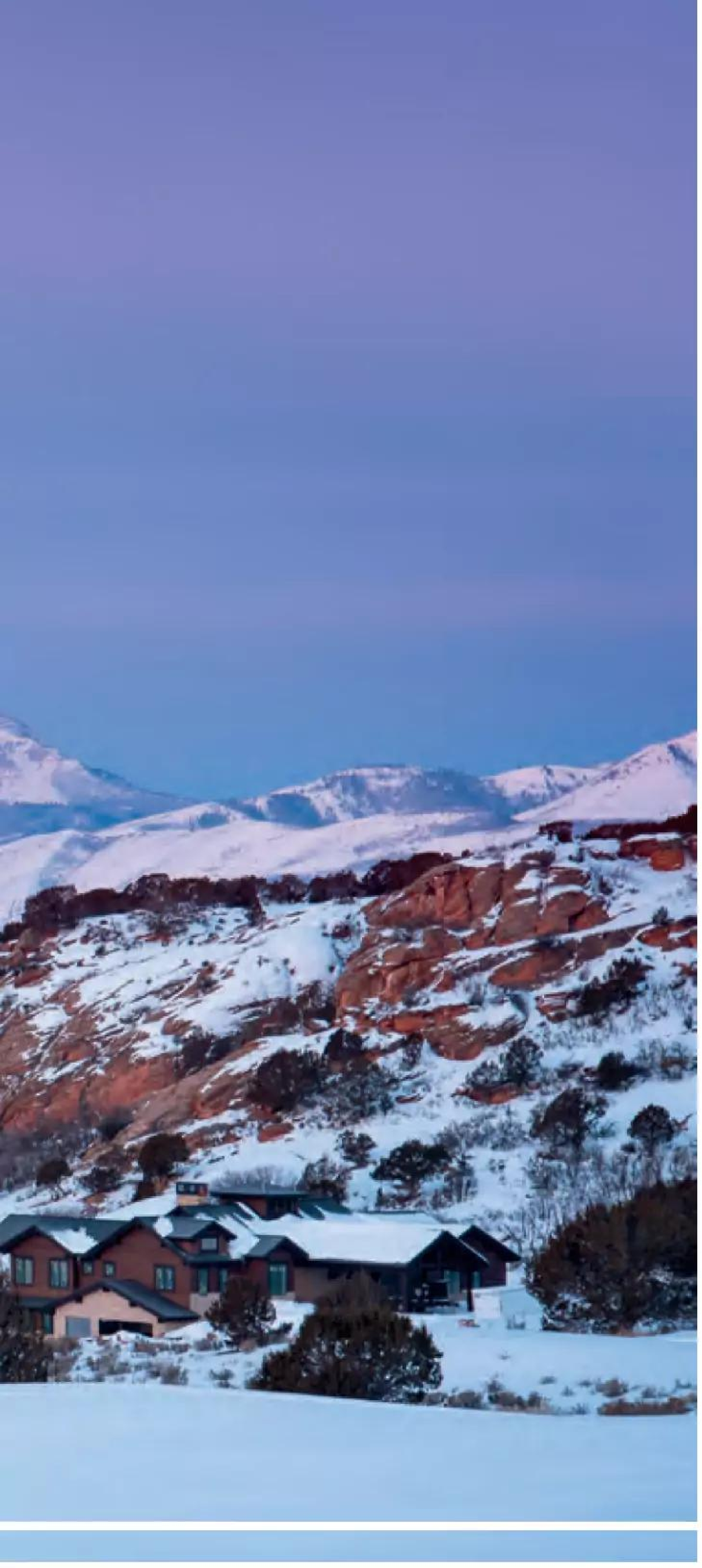
Red Ledges epitomizes private mountain living with seamless access to Deer Valley® and a life elevated by design.

With the debut of Deer Valley's® East Village, world-class skiing has never felt closer—or more seamless—for those who call Red Ledges home.

Just minutes from the new base area, this private mountain community in the heart of Heber Valley, just minutes from Park City, offers an unmatched blend of adventure, exclusivity, and ease. Here, members enjoy the rare privilege of ski-in/ski-out access to Deer Valley® Resort through three private on-mountain lodges—each offering elegant comfort, personalized service, and a warm retreat between runs.

Red Ledges' dedicated ski programming transforms every winter day into a concierge experience. A complimentary ski shuttle, operating in 20-minute intervals, delivers members to the slopes in style—powered by a fleet of luxury vehicles and supported by a team of attentive drivers and ski valets who handle the details so the focus stays where it should: on the snow.

But the allure of winter at Red Ledges extends well beyond the mountain. Whether exploring



the community's 7-mile adventure trail on snowshoes, joining a cross-country outing, or participating in one of the many seasonal events—from "Flight & Bite" tastings to indoor tennis and pickleball—the opportunities to connect, recharge, and play are endless.

For families, the experience is multigenerational and deeply personal. While parents carve first tracks, children dive into crafts, clinics, and outdoor adventures curated by the on-site Director of Events. For all ages, Red Ledges captures the essence of winter living: effortless, elevated, and endlessly engaging.

As Deer Valley's® next chapter unfolds, Red Ledges stands perfectly poised to offer the best of both worlds—a private sanctuary in Heber Valley, with one of the world's most celebrated ski resorts just moments away.

RED LEDGES™
UTAH

Learn more:
RedLedges.com | 877.733.5334

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INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE
PARK CITY

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STORY BY
EDEN HERBSTMAN

FALLING FOR FALL

"Fall lends itself to communal eating." This month, recipe developer and author Alison Roman has a new cookbook, *Something From Nothing* ("You need so much less than you think"). As a traveler, however, "I pack so much stuff I don't need. I'm so bad." Always cooking while traveling, she prefers houses over hotels. "Cooking takes priority, and I like to feel like I'm living in a place." A Delta loyalist—"I don't fly anything else, really"—she nevertheless swears by Korean Air's in-flight menu: "truly delicious." Here, her tasty travels.

Menorca, Spain

"I *love* Menorca. I went there on my honeymoon. We stayed at Amagatay, which was amazing and incredible. It was a lot more chill than how I hear Mallorca described. Menorca doesn't have that party vibe, which I appreciated. It's small enough to navigate for a long weekend."

Maine

"I'm very into anything ocean-adjacent. I don't stay in hotels often, but the Chebeague Island Inn is really nice. J's Oyster is always my first stop, and Tandem Coffee Roasters I like for anything and everything. Wiscasset Antiques Mall has crackled glass carafes and nautical still lifes, and I love McLoons for clams."

Catskills, New York

"It feels full of potential. The food is great. And it's quiet, and there's never any traffic. If you're used to a specific type of Upstate, you can be surprised by how beautiful it is. I opened my store, First Bloom, in Bloomville, and I recommend Brushland Eating House and Magpies on Pink Street."

Sicily, Italy

"I'm not a glitz-and-glamour Italy person. I appreciate a mix of undiscovered beauty and natural things. I've been twice and saw just a percentage of what it offers. It's my favorite place in recent memory. It was the first time I had nuts as cheese in a pasta, and there's a lot of North African influence. I remember having a sardine pasta with pistachio."

IMAGES **GETTY IMAGES; ALISON ROMAN/INSTAGRAM; ADOBE STOCK**

Capture the Magic

FUENTE OPUSX de la Fuente

FUENTE OPUSX Rare Estate Reserve

Blessings and Love to All!
Happy Holidays

Carlito Fuente

Carlos Fuente, father and son.

Warmest Wishes from the Fuente Family

AF

ARTURO FUENTE

The Reigning Family Of Premium Cigars

Since 1912

Wherever You Go for the Holidays, the Risk of Skin Cancer Goes Too

The sun is our constant companion. But the same gorgeous rays that light our journeys can also contribute to skin cancer. Be sure to pack your sunscreen, and if you are diagnosed, learn more about GentleCure–the leading destination for a safe and effective, surgery-free treatment experience.

GentleCure™

TOUGH ON CANCER • GENTLE ON SKIN

Not an actual patient.

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